CORE SKILLS
COMPOSITION MASTERCLASS
Add impact to your art
with Dan Dos Santos

Ahoy there!
DIGITAL PAINTING
Discover a treasure trove
of colour and perspective
skills to improve your art!

Workshop
PHOTOSHOP LAYER TIPS
Pro advice to get the
best out of your work

*shiver me timbers! Aly Fell
reveals his swashbuckling
art secrets on page 70!*

Inside
**CREATURE SECRETS
WITH PAUL BONNER**
DRAW AND PAINT A
POSTER WITH TYPE
**BRILLIANT NEW
SKIN PAINTING TIPS**

ARTIST INSIGHT! JAMES GURNEY UNLOCKS THE LEGACY OF HOWARD PYLE

Image by synthymonkey. Miki3 from Content Paradise. Circus props by Sixus 1 and Luké A, TerraDome by Runtime DNA.

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Welcome...
to a masterful issue

Following on from our Alphonse Mucha retrospective in issue 77, this month we take a look at the legacy of Howard Pyle. An acclaimed artist who's cited as an influence by many artists that have graced these pages, we felt it was time to look at why Pyle's art has stood the test of time. We asked James Gurney to describe the substance and style in Pyle's work – read his thoughts on page 56. So, which art master should we feature next? Please email in and let me know your thoughts.

A workshop I very much enjoyed this issue is Dan Dos Santos's masterclass in composition. It's always a joy to pore over Dan's art, but even better when he also explains the technical reasons as to why his images work. Unmissable advice on how to frame your art starts on page 78. There's also guidance on painting skin, using photos as textures and creating a poster with type. Oh, and how can I not mention the cover art and workshop from Aly Fell, an ImagineFX favourite? Aly really captured the seafaring spirit of our pirate heroine and I love her cheeky charm. See how he did it on page 70.

A quick mention for those of you thinking of subscribing. Sign up to 13 print issues and you'll receive a copy of ArtRage Studio Pro, and save up to 40 per cent off the cover price. See page 36 for details!

Taking all of the above into consideration, I'm certain that you just don't get this mix of creative talent, jaw-dropping art inspiration, value and expertise in any other magazine. Here's to better paintings…

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

Our special cover for subscribers this issue.

Subscribe! See pages 35 (digital edition) and 36.
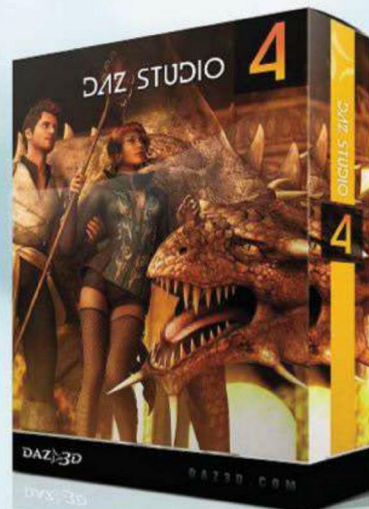
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
Cover artist

Aly's personal portfolio is a treasure trove of beautiful pin-up art, so when we asked him to paint our pirate cover he jumped at the chance

Aly Fell

COUNTRY: England
SOFTWARE: Photoshop
WEB: www.darkrising.co.uk

Having begun his career at the famous UK animation studio Cosgrove Hall, Aly then moved into the video games industry before going freelance and taking commissions from the likes of Simon & Schuster and HarperCollins. Aly's personal work is focused on playful female characters and pin-up art.

This was painted by Aly for the cover of Seanan McGuire's novel, Discount Armageddon.

In progress

Creating a new, high-flying cover star

Wanting to add a new perspective to this issue's cover, we struck on the idea of a pirate shimmying up a mast. With Aly on board, he sent over some sketches to match our cover concept. Aly's character is suitably glamorous and sea worthy, but the perspective needs tweaking.

We opted to remove the sword as it moves focus away from our pirate girl. Aly then refines the perspective. Bringing the viewer above the character, dropping the ship below and gives the cover the sense of deep focus we were looking for.

With everything heading in the right direction Aly works up the painting in colour and begins refining the dramatic elements of the image. The coattails and her shirt billowing in the wind, coupled with the rush of water below and the extreme angle, make for an engaging cover. Turn to page 70 to see more of Aly's process.

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
Contents

Delaware Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1912

"If an object in your picture looks too big, make it bigger. If it looks too small, make it smaller"
Remembering the great Howard Pyle

Reader FX Posé
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

See page 8 for the best new art ➤➤

Q&A: Movement
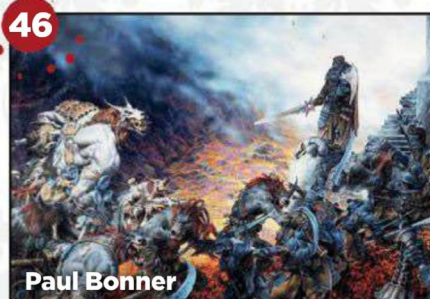
Paul Bonner

Q&A: Blood

Q&A: Skin

Development sheet

Sketchbook

Studio profile

86

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX
Workshops
Advice and techniques from pro artists…

Artist Q&A

Artist Q&A

74

Use texture in your art

90

Colour a space scene

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Xi Zhang

LOCATION: China
WEB: www.ramzes.cghub.com
EMAIL: 32415607@qq.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

"I hate finishing a piece 100 per cent," says Xi. "I love the new ideas and loathe the old – I guess I'm fickle like that." He may be fickle in his approach to his own art, but as a trained 2D and 3D artist, the ideas come thick and fast for him.

Xi's been working for Tencent Technology, in China, for eight years after studying traditional Chinese paintings for four years. He's also taught visual design, including 3D work.

"I got my first job at an advertising company, and it was then that I realised I was interested in game art," he tells us. "So I gave up a good salary at my advertising job and started working from the bottom-up in the games industry." From then he worked on Sega titles, and now he's a full-time 3D character and scene artist.

1 LEAD OF GUARDS "There are some interesting elements used to shape this character, including a teapot and a chicken. Oh, and he's powered by steam, with a lattice blade in there too, so he can chop his enemies into pieces."

2 WOW4 "I've been a World of Warcraft fan for eight years, and painting this fan art piece was my only solace when I felt bored at work during client updates (although I probably shouldn't admit to that!)."

3 MOUSE GIRL "This is the girlfriend of a young king, and we see her here apparently trapped. Her dress looks like an onion. I used light and colour to convey the violence in the scene, and I hope the viewer can get some dynamic imagination from this static frame."

ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulation Xi, you've won copies of Exotique 6 and Character Modeling 3. To find out more about these two indispensable art resources, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.

Artist crit

French artist Serge Birault salutes Xi's puzzling visions

"This is very well painted with soft, well-balanced colours. And I love the contrast between the character's sweetness and the violence of the scene; the fact that your first impression of her may very well be wrong."

豆三先

1

As a child growing up in Toronto, Canada, RB White had an age-old problem to solve: should he be a comic or animation artist. "And after more than 20 years of professional work I'm still not sure," he says.

During that time he's been working as a freelancer for animation studios, publishing companies and advertising agencies, and he's currently designing for animated TV shows.

"My first contact with a digital tablet was in 1994 – it felt like I was scratching glass with a rusted nail," he recalls. "I was sure digital painting was a waste of time. As usual, I was completely wrong."

IMAGINEFX CRIT
"RB White's style is a blend of ludicrously shaped ladies and obscenely sized guns, both popping out from plain backgrounds. And with his cool comic style, I'd really like to see what happens when he focuses his playful eye on another subject."
Beren Neale,
Staff Writer

2

1 BLACK HAIR "From the title of this image you can see I started with the long hair as the image's main focal point. And then a cute woman with a gun turned up!"

2 SERIES BG 1942 "It took me a while to finish this image, as I'm too busy with my everyday work. Compositionally I wanted to create three different parts for it: a girl with smooth skin, a simple unfinished-looking background and a weapon with a huge amount of time-consuming details."

1

Anna Mohrbacher
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.wingedchime.net
EMAIL: aniabrc@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop CS2

"I find cuteness in things that other people consider creepy," says Anna, though we think she's being a little harsh on herself. Having worked up from coloured pencils and watercolours, Anna got serious about digital art when she met her husband Peter. "Since then I've done work for various RPGs, but I would like to make the transition from fantasy and sci-fi art into young adult publishing." Anna also has a burning desire to write and illustrate her own children's book, inspired by a new addition to her family. "Recently I became a mother and that makes me feel more inspired and determined to accomplish that goal."

2

1 QUIET SHORE "Last summer I went on a short trip to Florida, and this piece was inspired by some ocean shells I found there. I wanted to depict a beach where everything was humongous and somewhat surreal. This is a second piece in a series depicting a little girl on her journey to find her big sister."

2 AN OFFERING "This is a personal piece that was inspired by the work of Hayao Miyazaki and by Tove Marika Jansson's Moomin stories. This depicts a little girl making an offering to forest spirits. It was the first of several images in a series I'm currently working on and I'm really enjoying the process."

3 OCTO PARTY "This image features octopus-inspired creatures playing with a mermaid that they've captured in a glass. Originally the focal point was meant to be the mermaid in the glass, but I thought the two creatures at the sides were stealing the show from her. To fix this, I added the third critter – the one staring through the glass."

3

🇺🇸 James Chung
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.jimbopaints.blogspot.com
EMAIL: jcsketch@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter

It was while attending Art Center College of Design, California that James first experimented with digital art. "I enjoyed doing things manually so much," he says, "but eventually I gave in and realised that's where the industry was heading to, whether it's in film, video games or automotive design." There was no escaping the writing on the wall.

Currently a freelance artist/designer in the games industry and working on the odd advert, James's main goal is to eventually produce concept art for motion pictures. "I can't imagine myself doing anything else, I'm constantly practising to better myself as an artist and designer."

1 CITROËN ADVENTURE WAGON "The idea here was to design a vehicle that would specifically go out and search for undiscovered land. I chose the brand Citroën because of its heritage. I wanted the vehicle design to reflect the strange environments that it would be travelling through."

2 DOCKING "I wanted to show the scale of things in this painting and imply that the future can be a smoky, grimy place. Of course, the main subject is the ship docking, and with that I was keen to show something that looks beaten up, something that – just by looking at it – you know it has some kind of history."

3 STREET NIGHTS "One thing that always interests me is seeing things that we are familiar with mixed in with a futuristic world, such as a taxi from the 40s still driving around or maybe hovering in an advanced city that perhaps it wouldn't really belong in. I thought the vehicles and people would help keep the concept grounded with the strange architecture around them."

1

2
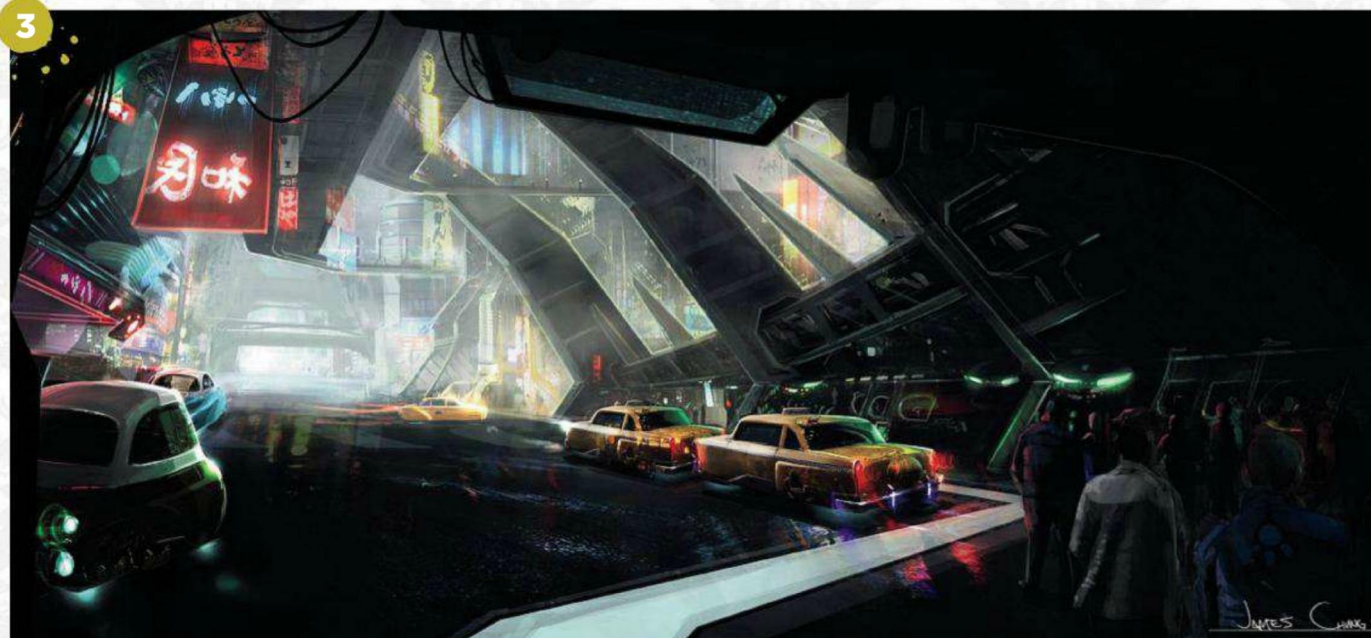
🇪🇸 **Guillem Marí**
LOCATION: Spain
WEB: www.guillemmari.
daportfolio.com
EMAIL: guillembe@yahoo.es
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

What do you do when you're most successful at drawing, painting and daydreaming? For Guillem, it was a no-brainer: "Becoming an artist was the only natural step I could take," he says.

Once graduated from art school in Barcelona, Guillem worked in animation, then freelanced in comics and illustration. "I worked for a Scandinavian kids' magazine, then I illustrated TV advertising storyboards." After a stint as a Marvel comics colourist, he's been illustrating posters and card games, background paintings and puppet designs for theatres. "I'd love to become a book illustrator or a concept artist," says Guillem.

1 TELEKINETIC
"This one was made for a zombie-themed card game called Ravenous Biohazard Level 5, by IMI Game Studios, Canada. In this case the client asked for a kind of unbalanced young woman, with telekinetic powers and altered DNA, getting rid of some zombies. Both these images are examples of my more realistic and clean style."

2 GOTHIC WITCH "Another one for the Ravenous card game. The description of the character said that she is a gothic-style occultist witch who has a zombie as a servant, controlled by her magic powers. I used it to experiment with different coloured light sources."

Both images © IMI Game Studios 2011

FXPosé submissions to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

Ulyana Regener
LOCATION: Germany
WEB: www.adelenta.deviantart.com
EMAIL: nachtigall.8@gmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter

"My mother tricked me when I was five by telling me 'you did this' while pointing to a picture that she'd drawn," Ulyana tells us. "My mum was an architect!" Not surprisingly, Ulyana was so amazed that she immediately started her love affair with art.

Born in Vladivostok, Russia, she moved to New Zealand as a teenager, where she studied opera singing. "After emigrating to Germany in 2006, my strong desire for art, which was my hobby before, turned into full-time study and occupation." Ulyana wants to one day get into illustration and teaching digital art.

1 LADY LADYBUG "I wanted to paint something colourful, yet mysterious. Lady Ladybug is a character from my insect series that I'm working on at the moment. I really love nature and I try to integrate it into my paintings."

2 FREEDOM "My intention in this picture was to send a message to the viewer that no matter what kind of situation one is in, there is a way out, just spread those wings and live life to the fullest. The picture is dark, with the winged female figure in the light symbolising purity."

3 THE SEARCHER "Lavendra is an original character I created while sketching and doodling around. This picture really appeared from nowhere and as I kept on painting it, a story built up with it. Lavendra has a gift given to her by her mother of being able to go through into parallel worlds."

4 LADY BUTTERFLY "This picture is also from the insect series. The inspiration came to me while listening to Meditation from Thaïs by Jules Massenet – a beautiful classical piece of music. I wanted to integrate the flow and poetic movement of music into the picture and represent the music with the image."

3

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"By varying her colours and poses, Ulyana's brought depth and interest to her beautiful character studies. And she captures movement well, too – her image Freedom being a good example of this classic storytelling device."
Cliff Hope
Operations Editor

4

🏴 **Owen Rixon**
LOCATION: Scotland
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EMAIL: owen@owenrixon.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

An animator and illustrator based in Edinburgh, Owen recently graduated from art school and has been working in the film and animation industry for the past couple of years. "Fantasy and sci-fi scenes influence most of what I do," he says. "I started painting digitally about 10 years ago on the most basic graphics programs available, and loved how fast it was to make interesting, colour images."

1 RITE OF PASSAGE "I wanted to portray an everyday character in an unusual context. I decided on a gnome because the image of a little man in blue with a pointy red hat and a beard is so recognisable. Here, the gnome is taking part in a rite of passage, much like young native Americans did, where he has to kill his first animal to become a man."

2 SMALL FRIEND "I was keen to show friendship between the most unlikely characters I could think of. I wanted the viewer to decide what the tiny monster sitting on the gruff man's shoulder was doing. I think he's singing a song and the man isn't too happy about it!"

3 DRAGON WHISPERER "I'd been doing a lot of flat character animation at the time and wanted to do something that was really detailed, so decided something covered in scales with lots of teeth would be the way to go. I had the idea for this after remembering seeing a film called The Horse Whisperer when I was young, and liked the idea that a man could take something as terrifying and wild as this dragon and tame it."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"I adore the characterful interplay between the two unlikely buddies in Small Friend. Owen has captured a moment between the pair in a way that I want to know what happens next…"
Claire Howlett,
Editor

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1

Kelly Perry
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EMAIL: kellyperryart@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter

Kelly turned to digital art a few years ago to achieve a greater level of detail in her illustrations, "and to break away from my current colour palette," she says. "I'd seen some amazing digital illustrations online and was so inspired I spent every spare dollar I had on a copy of Painter, and I wasn't disappointed."

Working freelance, Kelly is concentrating on book covers and concept art, and was recently invited to tour a gaming company in San Francisco. "At this point in my career I'm taking advantage of as many experiences as possible," she tells us

1 SPRING "This is my most recent illustration. I also started this piece in Photoshop before finishing it in Painter. I like beginning my illustrations in Photoshop because it enables me to use layers to quickly block in values and colours without losing the integrity of the original drawing. I then finish with Painter because I like the look of the realistic brushstrokes."

2 MEMOIRS OF A GEISHA "This illustration was my first experiment with Painter. Memoirs of a Geisha is one of my favourite novels, and I'd always wanted to illustrate scenes from the book and the movie. I started by experimenting with oil brushes such as the Fine Camel and the Opaque Round brushes. I enjoyed the increased amount of control I had over detail and colour."

3 BIG LEAP "This is a personal illustration inspired by Frank Frazetta, although I wanted to give the women a little more power and turn the tables a bit. I was trying to create a composition that had energy and tension and would also work as a fold-over book cover, and used Photoshop and Painter."

SEND US YOUR ARTWORK!

Want to see your digital art grace these very pages? Send your work to us, along with an explanation of your techniques, the title of each piece of art, a photo of yourself and your contact details. Images should be sent as 300dpi JPEG files, on CD or DVD. All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.

You can also email submissions for FXPosé. Bear in mind that files must be no more than 5MB in total, or we won't receive them. fxpose@imaginefx.com

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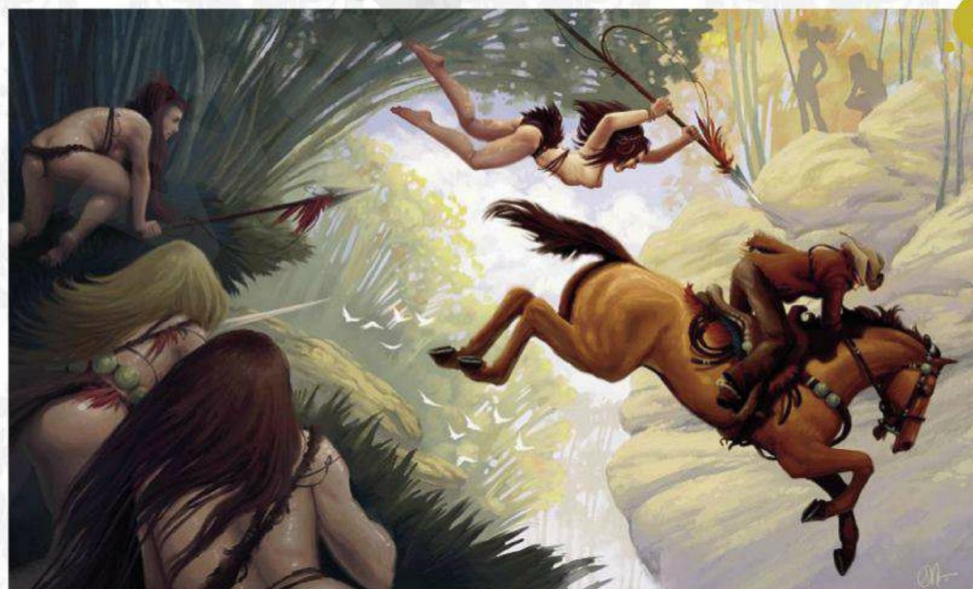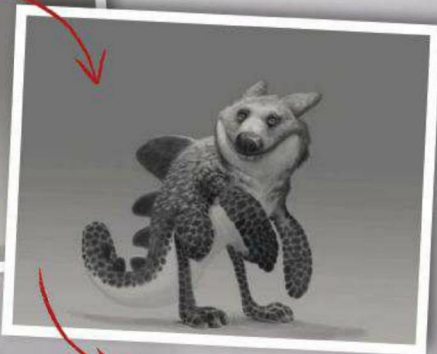
Bobby Chiu shares this never-before-seen image from a new online tutorial. In the ongoing sessions, a variety of techniques are learned, then combined to produce a final image.

❝ Online tutorials give everyone the chance to learn from known artists ❞
Bobby Chiu
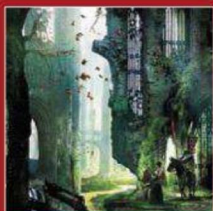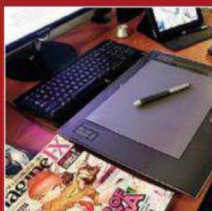
Virtual classrooms

Online tutorials Available to everyone, many at increasingly affordable prices, online tutorials have become an indispensable tool for becoming a better digital artist

Online art classes may have been around since the 90s, but with better-quality videos and live online interaction, they now offer tailor-made teachings for artists at every stage.

There's also a lot more of them. Art tutorial giant Gnomon Workshop has recently set up its online Workshop Library (**www.bit.ly/gnomon1**), offering hundreds of video tutorials for a yearly fee. Hungry artists can devour as many of the 300 traditional and digital training videos as they can in a year for $499 (roughly £324), and with an art college or university placement costing a lot more, artists will be taught by the finest tutors around without the fear of massive debt.

Bobby Chiu founded online tutorial provider Schoolism in 2006 and is still convinced of the potential and power of what he's doing (**www.schoolism.com**). "Online education is the future. To have personal feedback from a professional that students respect gives them extra motivation," he says, "but also provides everyone with the same opportunity to receive top education from the minds of known, successful artists." For $998 (around £645) artists can get a Critiqued Session – nine to 14 weeks of online teaching, with personalised video feedback from your tutor.

If you're on a tighter budget there are free options available. We're building up our own YouTube channel at **www.youtube.com/imaginefx**. It's filled with video tutorials from great artists like Marta Dahlig, James Gurney and Daarken, the last of whom offers free PDF and video tutorials at **www.enliighten.com**.

"My last video tutorial focused on how to paint an apple," says Daarken. "Covering the fundamentals is important and often overlooked in the video tutorial market today." The site has

You'll find plenty of great video tutorials at **www.youtube.com/imaginefx**. Better still, they're all free!

"This is from the new paid tutorial I released a few days ago, called The Untraveled Path," says Daarken. You can find it in his store here: **www.bit.ly/daarken2**.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT
ERIC MILLER

The Gnomon Workshop director talks about the new online Workshop Library

Why did you guys decide to put your tutorials online?
We foresaw a shift to online delivery of training content many years ago, but this library of over 1,000 hours of tutorials has been in development for three years. The library needed to be massive and to include all the disciplines in the field of entertainment arts.

What's the reaction been like?
The response has been fantastic – especially from studios and educational institutions. We have two platforms, to account for the needs of both the single user and the institutional client. The Personal Edition enables anyone to purchase an annual licence, while the Studio Edition offers a host of administrative and reporting tools for larger institutions.

Is everything included?
Everything except a few special releases, such as the Creature Development Master Class box set from Alex Alvarez (which is only offered as a physical box set). The Workshop also sells digital assets, like texture sets and 3D models that are not part of the library. However, all assets and scene files included with the DVD are available through the library subscription service.

What are the savings?
Annual subscriptions costs $499 (about £324), which amounts to roughly $42 (£27) a month. Because most of our DVDs sell individually between $39 (£25) and $89 (£58), a user would receive around 10 DVDs a year for the price of a subscription licence. Subs customers have access to around $20,000 worth of content. It's a bargain any way you cut it.

Eric Miller is the managing director of The Gnomon Workshop. He specialises in 3D modelling.

www.bit.ly/EricMiller

Online tutorials are a great idea, but will they stop bad habits forming?

only been online for two months, but registered over 11,000 unique visitors from 115 countries.

Ron Lemen, who has taught thousands of our readers to draw anatomy, has made his name through online tutorials. Having produced them for the past two decades, his tuition has been featured on www.conceptart.org, several Gnomon DVDs and soon the Los Angeles Academy of Figurative Art. Over the past year Ron's worked with The Art Department (TAD, **www. theartdepartment.org**), an online school that's pioneering an offline extension. For an additional fee, students can use TAD's PODs – three US studios where students can go to study and interact with fellow students and lecturers, as part of their online courses.

The addition of a physical space to a primarily virtual classroom is essential to the future of online education for Ron. "I can't look over the shoulder of a virtual student to prevent a habit from forming, or to break one already firmly developed," he warns.

For the student unable to take out loans and a sabbatical from work to pursue a conventional art education, one-off online tutorials are a real alternative. But don't think that because the material's available all your problems as an artist are over. "The videos are not going to make you a better artist," says Ron, "but they are going to make you more educated to the potential within their craft."

Life is Humiliation
by Matt Boyce

Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable
"If the first sketch looks like the one I want to do, to make sure, I always make the other 49 anyway."
Howard Pyle would also probably take off and nuke the site from orbit, just to be sure… See page 56

True grit

Long time coming Sometimes an image takes on an epic journey, with an artist's initial intent and skills changing over time

A personal painting takes as long as it takes to finish. Sometimes this is longer than expected, and as Jonny Taylor found out, sometimes that's three years.

Jonny Marvel, to the ImagineFX community, started his Dreamcatcher image in May 2009 and was soon contacted by us to participate in a feature about working on past paintings. "From that, I felt she didn't suit the rest of the image," he says, "so I removed her and used her in this modern take on Snow White."

With more experience, Jonny decided to look over it again, determined to perfect the image. "The main corrections were the lighting and colouring," he recalls. "The original lacked scale and the colours needed balance. But this is probably the longest time I've spent to finish an image to the point were I can be proud of the outcome." See more: www.imaginefx.com/jmarvel.

If you're having trouble with an image, send it in to imaginefx@ futurenet.com and you can get help from the pros in our Art Class.

Jonny has finished many paintings in between this image, but somehow he always came back to this one.

The physics of great art

First of many With a career covering some 25 years, Stephan Martiniere's new art book Velocity groups a selection of old and new pieces, and styles, together

In physics, velocity describes the speed and direction of an object, so it's an apt title for Stephan Martiniere's third art book that looks at some of the art from his prolific career. And yet there's another reason it's a great book title. "It's also a cool word," says Stephan.

On sale now, Stephan worked on Velocity all last year, selecting a range of old and new pieces of art from a range of films, games and illustrations. "I wanted to showcase the different styles and approaches that have shaped my career," says the artist. The

hardback book covers two of his favourite film projects: director Greg McLean's proposed sci-fi epic The Guardian (currently at script stage), and Gulliver, an abandoned 3D film project.

"For the first project I did multitudes of different concepts, ranging from weird aliens to gargantuan cities, going beyond bipedal or anthropomorphic concepts," says Stephan. "For Gulliver, I recreated Lilliput to Laputa, where there were a huge amount of ideas to explore."

You can see more of Stephan's art here: www.martiniere.com.

The artist is known for his versatility, but scenes like this have become his trademark.

Stephan painted the cover for Daniel Abraham's book, Price of Spring.

Competition
Win a copy of Velocity and a sketch by Stephan!

Up for grabs There are 10 signed books with an original sketch by the artist – along with one limited edition of Velocity – to be won!

Stephan Martiniere is giving ImagineFX readers the chance to win one of 11 copies of Velocity – there's 10 standard editions and one limited cloth-bound edition, all signed, and all with an extra original print from the artist.

To be in with a chance of winning one, go to www.futurecomps.co.uk/martiniere and answer the question there correctly (there'll be three answers to choose from). The competition closes 3 April 2012 and is open to readers worldwide. For a full set of competition rules go to www.imaginefx.com/comp_rules.
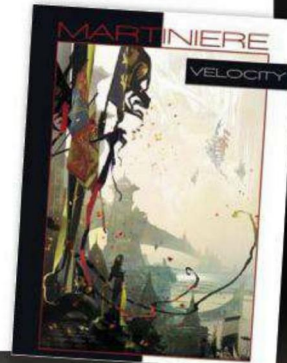
+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART…

Brent Hollowell

www.brenthollowell.deviantart. com

He may describe himself as Brent The Noob on his dA page, but this 23-year-old artist boasts a nice line in well-portrayed beasts – all jagged teeth and ravaged skin. There are also sections on environments, studies, sketches and fan art that are worth a look.

Tsvetka

www.ink-pot.deviantart.com

Tsvetka favours the flat-on portrait above most other formats, and yet her colour choices are different and perfectly selected for each image. There's plenty of full-colour images to enjoy here, but be sure to check out her sketches section and her fantastic line art folder.

Sivern Chernotrav

www.chernotrav.deviantart.com

This Russian artist is busy studying, but still finds time to create loads of watercolours for public consumption on his dA page. Although some of the paintings' subjects are as delicately depicted as his painting method, Sivern is just as adept at bringing a bit of action to his pieces.

This multi-purpose shelf is peppered with assorted design magazines, reference books, novelty toys and industry awards.

On the wall is a flat-screen TV for viewing videos, demo reels, and, um, playing the PS3…
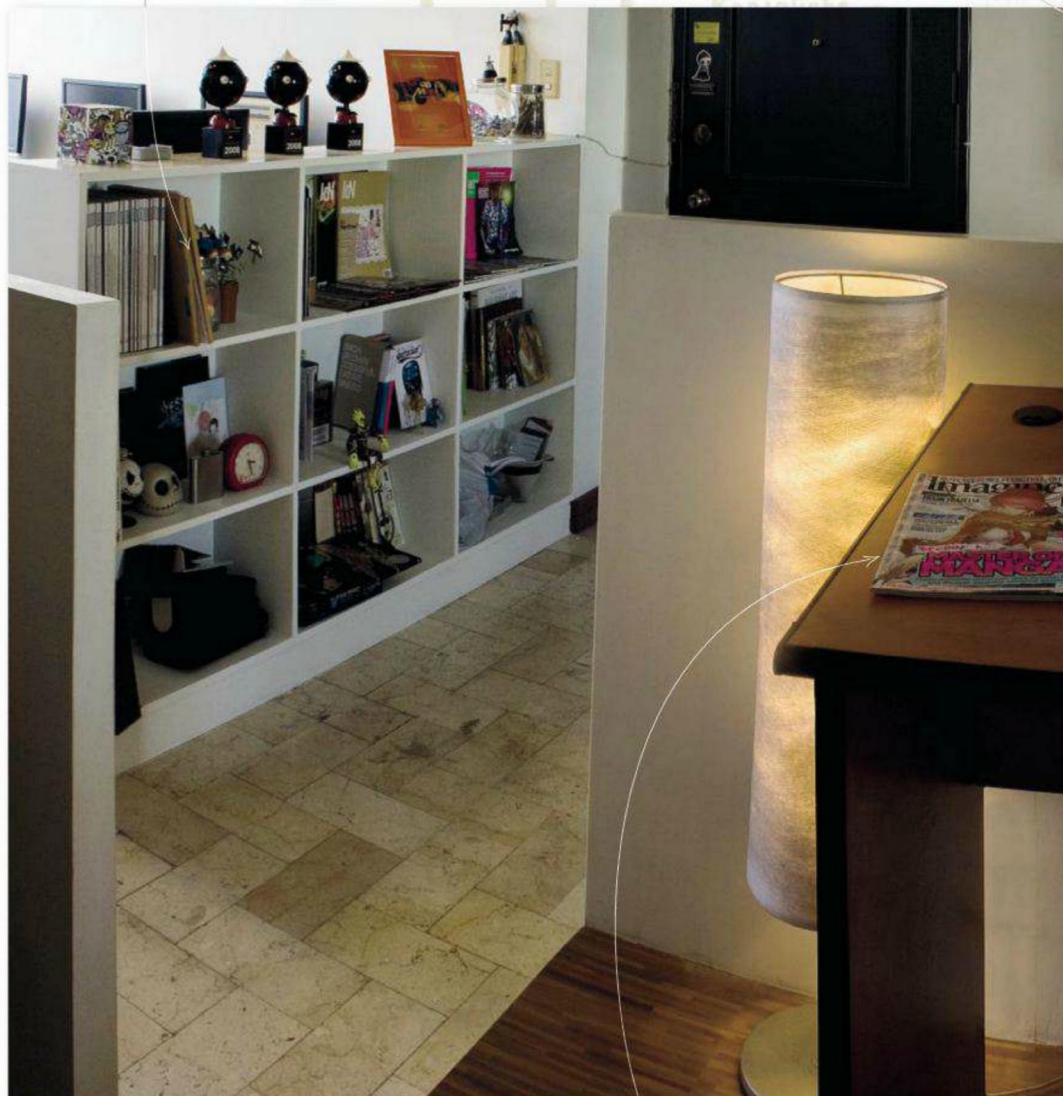
The left side of the table is reserved for reference print materials, since I'm a righty.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Chester Ocampo

Night owl Chester had the urge to bounce ideas off other artists, so he relocated to a new studio – six floors above his own apartment!

After working with Imaginary Friends Studios for a couple of years, I went back to Manila to work freelance. Two years of working in the living room was enough for me – I needed to reintroduce myself to society! Hence my current work setup.

My studio is located within the motion graphics and post-production studio of Acid House's office space, which is located on the penthouse floor of my apartment. I start the working day by fielding emails that range from inquiries, requests and works-in-progress. The bulk of the day is reserved for painting. I cap the day off with another round of emails, updating clients on the status of their projects. I try not to browse online too much while working, but there are just so many absurd things out there!

My family and girlfriend pictures remind me who I'm really working for, and why.

This iPad 2 is the newest addition to my gear. I'm still getting the hang of integrating it into my work process.

My Revoltech toys sometimes help in figuring out posed bodies at weird angles.
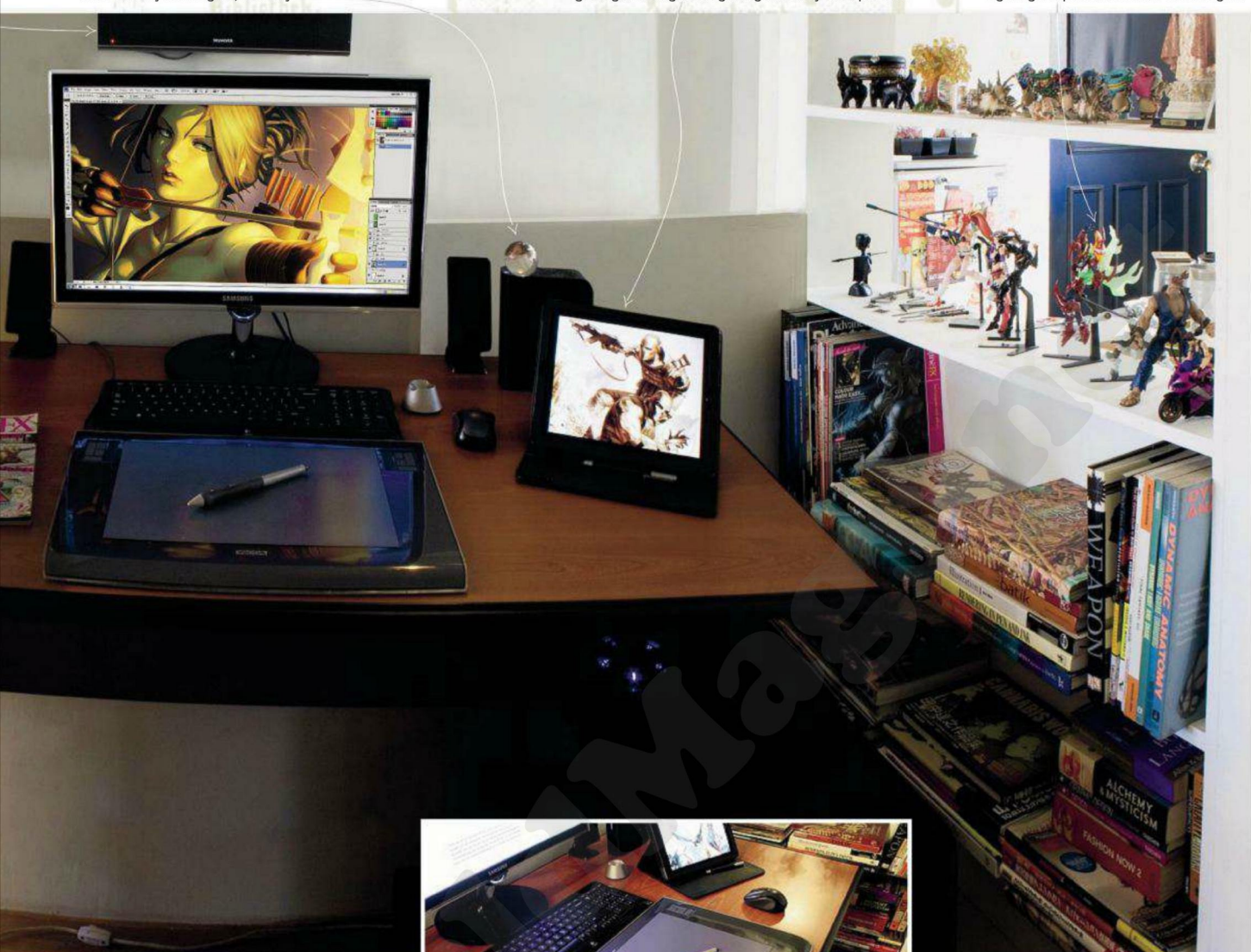
One cup of coffee a day and I'm all set to work, peppered with several short smoke breaks in between. (Remember: smoking is bad for your health, kids.)

I work on a PC that runs Photoshop smoothly and can handle a little bit of 3D modelling. After seven years I'm still using my Wacom Intuos3. It's been my stalwart companion ever since I started my career and has accompanied me even when I worked overseas. There's also the ever-present external hard drive to back up all my finished projects, and host music and videos.

Beside my workstation are a range of reference books, for inspiration and ideas on solving specific art problems. On the lower shelf is my treasured art book collection of various artists.
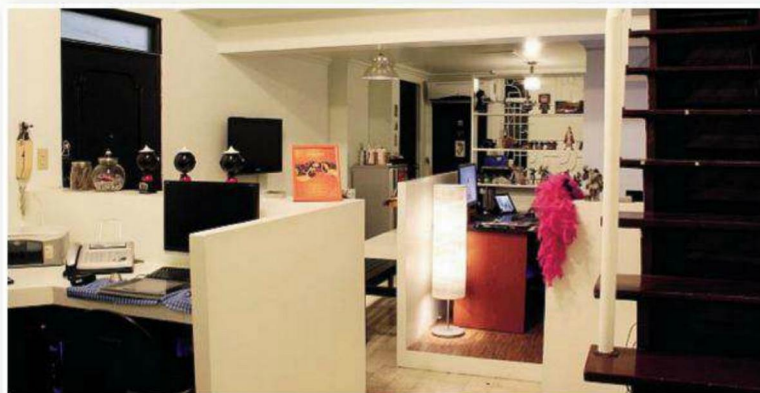
I work long hours and I work best at night. Despite recent efforts, I've got a long way to go before I become a morning person. *Philipines-based Chester is a professional freelance artist. Check out his art at www.chesterocampo.com.*
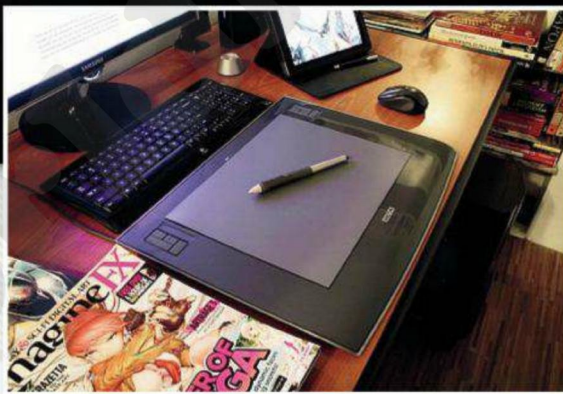
Upon this anvil, a forge was built. Words cannot express how much I love my tablet. We've seen our fair share of battles throughout the years, and it's never faltered. I plan to mount it on a wall someday when I eventually, yet tearfully, retire it.

Kick-ass motion graphics and post-production studio Acid House is where my studio is currently located. Hanging out with artists from different industries gives me a different perspective and ideas on how to go about the industry I'm in. It also helps that they're a bunch of awesome and crazy people.

Second coming

Getting it out there Being a traditional artist hasn't stopped Patrick J Jones from employing digital formats to promote his latest fantasy art tutorial

Once Patrick's second ebook was done, it took the artist seconds to upload it online.

With his new ebook out now, Patrick J Jones isn't declaring the death of the physical art book just yet, but he's got some clear views on both digital and physical mediums.

Patrick has worked on his second ebook Sci-fi and Fantasy Oil Painting Techniques 2 for the past year, and after he finished it there was a quick turnaround. "Once I've produced a digital book I can publish it to my webstore in minutes from my home studio," says the Australian artist, "and the world can instantly download it. The only drawback to this is I may never change out of my pyjamas."

This new release follows on from where the first book finished, taking a deeper look at Patrick's work process over various paintings. And that's not all. He's also gone back and updated the first book by 20 pages, to strengthen the flow from one to the other.

Even though Patrick studies oil paintings in his latest book, Techniques 2 isn't just for traditional artists. "I find that I'm a better digital painter each time I finish a traditional artwork and return to my Wacom and computer screen," says the artist.

Have a look: **www.pjartworks.com**.
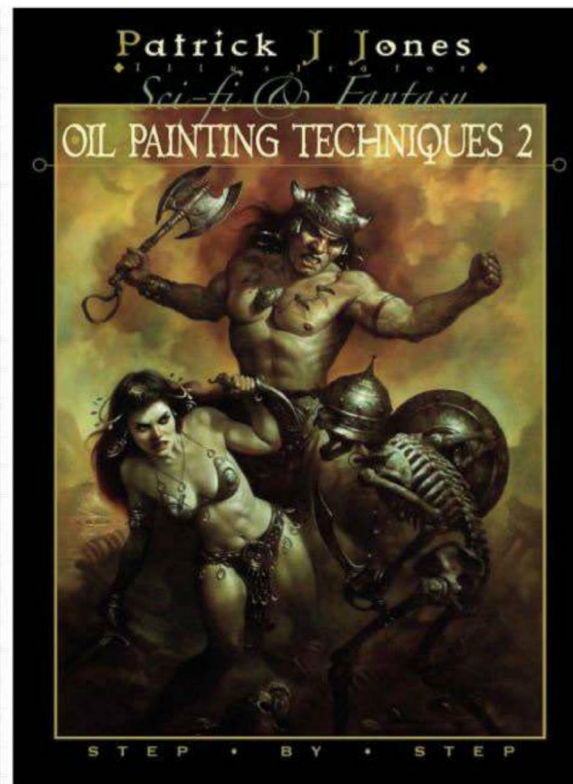
Patrick J Jones
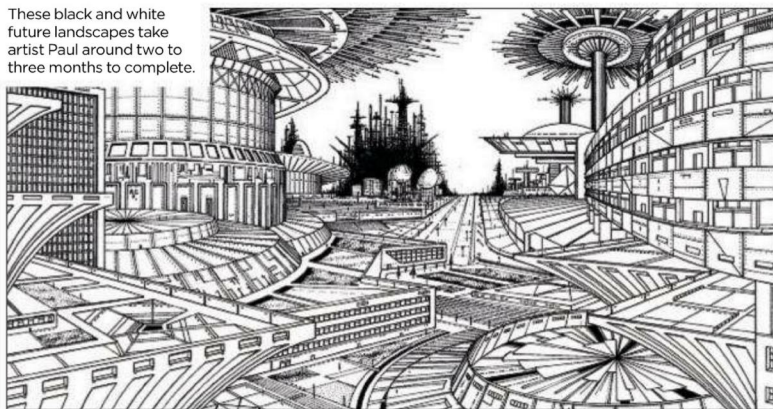*Illustrator*
Sci-fi & Fantasy
OIL PAINTING TECHNIQUES 2

S T E P • B Y • S T E P

These black and white future landscapes take artist Paul around two to three months to complete.

Back to the future

Readers' letters Artist Paul J Beard often gets his intricate, hand-drawn sci-fi landscapes mistaken for digital images – and you can see why!

We love receiving readers' letters here at ImagineFX, especially when they come with mind-blowing, futuristic sci-fi imagery. That's exactly what we got when we opened up a letter from one Paul J Beard of Southampton, England.

Inspired by our Vehicle Design December issue, Paul contacted us by letter with a bevy of black and white futuristic cityscape prints, – and 30 more high-definition scans stored on a CD. Having privately worked on such intricate pieces for years, Paul wanted to finally share them with the world. "I've been drawing these scenes as a hobby since

around 1985," he says. "Each section takes me around two or three months to complete, and many link up to make long versions over three metres wide."

Paul is now toying with the idea of going digital. "I realise that most of this sort of art is done on computers these days," he says, "and people often think that my work is done on a computer, so one of these days I'll get up to date with it all."
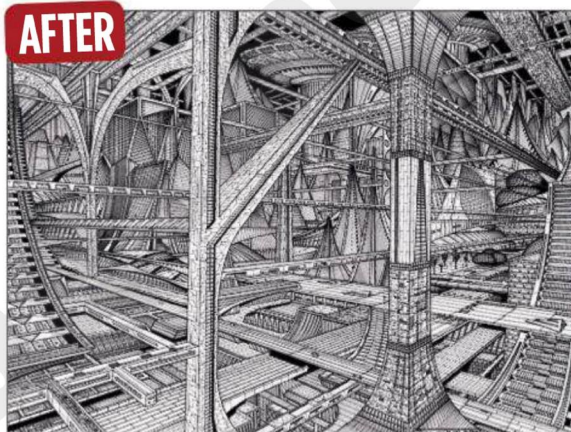
Check out some of the incredible images that Paul sent in here: www.imaginefx.com/ pbeard.

BEFORE
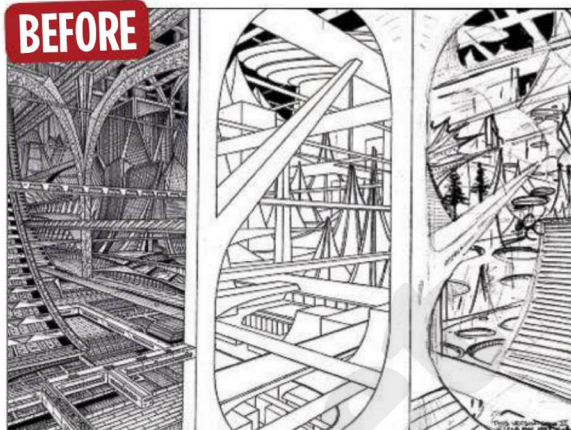
AFTER

Paul also included a before-and-after look at one of his more recent large-scale images.
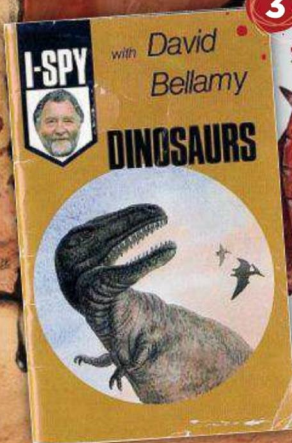
PLANET OF THE ARTS

HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF THE EVENTS AND ART BLOGS THAT HAVE GOT US IN A STIR THIS MONTH. IF YOU'VE GOT A STORY OR EVENT THAT SHOULD BE FEATURED HERE, SEND US THE DETAILS: **PLANET@IMAGINEFX.COM**. CHEERS!

Beren Neale, Staff Writer

SPECTRUM FANTASTIC ART LIVE
18-20 May | US

1 Kansas City's premier fantasy art event - this year you'll meet Brom, Mike Mignola, Android Jones, Phil Hale and Iain McCaig.

www.bit.ly/spectrumlive

EMILY CARROLL
Illustrator | Canada

2 Based in British Columbia, this artist loves Dune, video games and drawing. Check out the comics section of her online portfolio, which is bursting with cool content.

www.emcarroll.com

LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHASMOSAURS
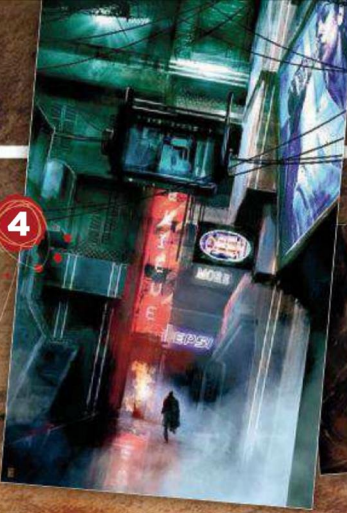David Orr and Marc Vincent | US

3 This well-written blog is devoted to dinosaurs in pop culture and regularly unearths some monster vintage paleo-art.
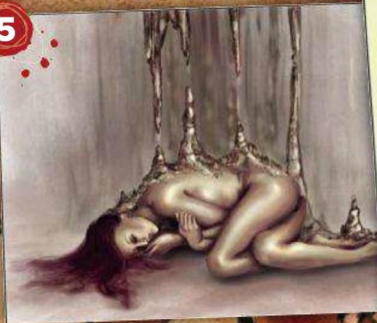
www.chasmosaurs.blogspot.com

MALO
Concept artist | Germany

4 The freelance concept and environment artist shares his latest works, including great submissions to ImagineFX's monthly Forum challenges.

www.malosart.blogspot.com

SKETCH JAM

The recent Nerdgasm event in Anaheim featured a full day of models acting out nerd fantasies for artists

Dr Sketchy's Anti-Art School: Anaheim branch
LOCATION: Rothick Art Haus, Anaheim, California
WHEN: Second and fourth Sunday of each month
WEB: www.drsketchy.com/branch/Anaheim

A sketch by artist Dan Almanzar, which features some imagined character heads.

Right, Krystal X Kaos prepares for the Apocalypse, to the excitement of Anaheim's sketchers.

Left, Kelly Castillo's wide-eyed take of one of the several models present on the day.

🏴 IVANKA KUTILKOVA
Illustrator | England

5 This up-and-coming artist believes it's human nature to create art, be it traditional or digital. Most items in her portfolio can also be bought as prints or posters.
www.ivankakutilkova.blogspot.com

🇸🇬 WILSON DELA FUENTE
Digital artist | Singapore

6 This fantastic digital painter commutes between Singapore and the Philippines (that's dedication for you!), using his creative skills to create game artwork.
www.artofwilson.blogspot.com

Map art by Jonny Duddle, www.duddlebug.com

Winners

Image of the month

Deadly skills Determined to depict the beauty of death, Dave Brasgalla drew on his travel experiences for extra art inspiration. And look where it got him!

You can easily forgive Dave Brasgalla for being a little apprehensive when approaching the 'Death' forum challenge. "Death often has such an ominous treatment in fantasy art," he says. "But then I realised it's really just a stage in a constant cycle and that some aspects of it can be quite beautiful – even romantic."

His recent travels have paid off too. "Last summer I photographed a girl sitting on a rock by the water, and some amazing tree roots in Visby, on the Swedish island of Gotland," he says. Dave also viewed the skeletal remains of warriors in their chain mail in a Visby museum.

TITLE: Death
WINNER: Dave Brasgalla
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/dave_brasgalla

Dave's recent visit to Sweden helped influence the creation of his image.
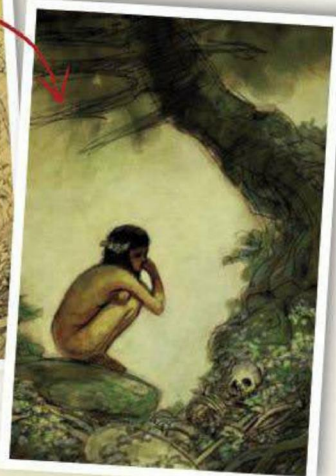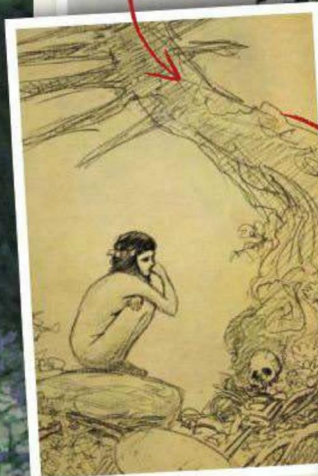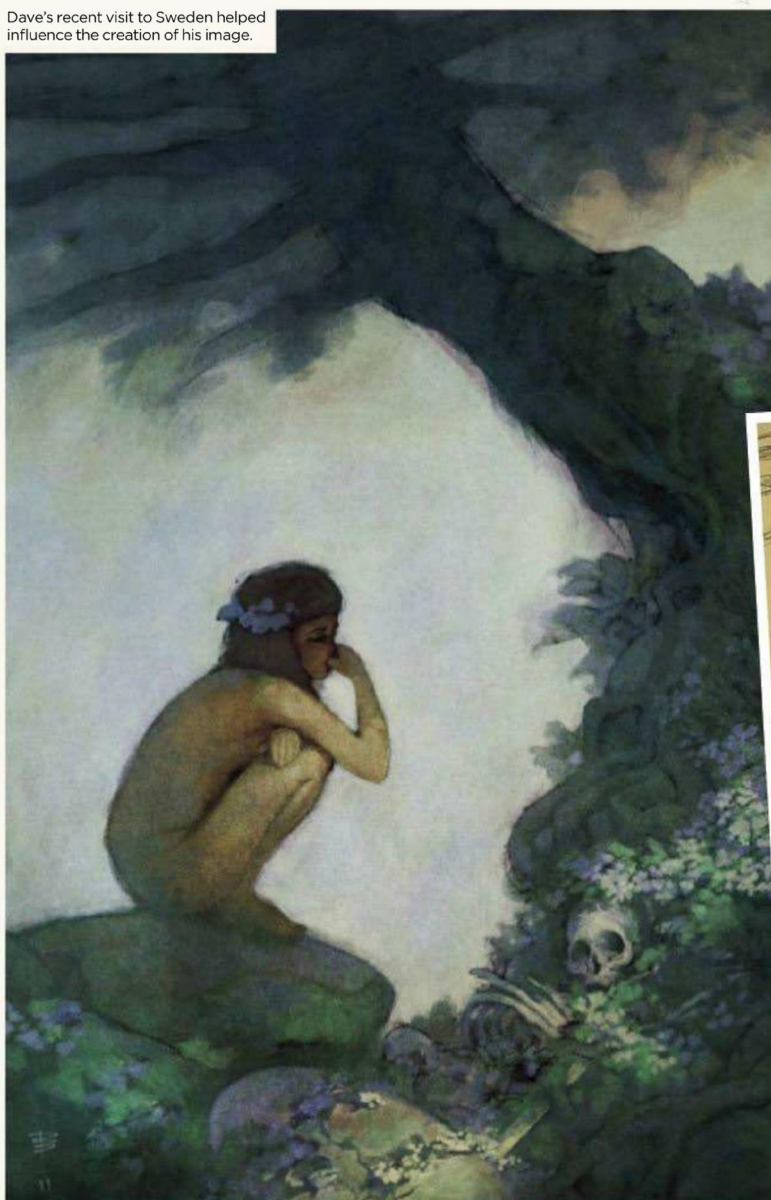
FORUM CRIT

"Words escape me how much I love this work. Subtle, not hitting the audience over the head. Very original in concept and treatment. Calming yet eerie. Beautiful style and expression."
Carly801

MYFX TITLE: Classics Desecrated
WINNER: Juan Blanco (Guang)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/guang

"This has to be one of my favourite challenges so far. Rembrandt's work is truly amazing and I hope I did it justice. I feel like his works can come to life when I'm standing in front of them, so I t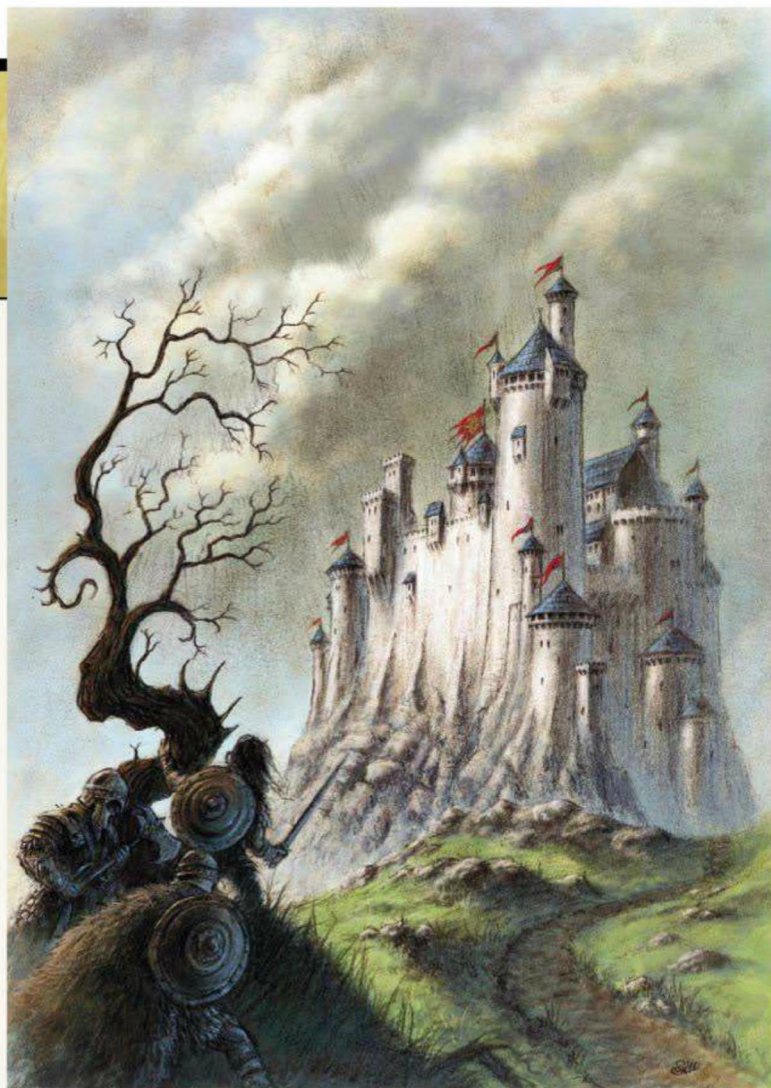hought it would be a cool idea to bring him back from the dead. Since finishing it, I think I've gone a bit zombie crazy."

MYFX TITLE: The Pendragon Castle of Camelot
WINNER: Christian Schwager (schwager)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/schwager

"I love castles (who doesn't?), so naturally I got quite excited about the opportunity to do my own version of Camelot. My aim was to capture the moment where Camelot starts to fade away into the realm of legend. Gustave Doré's work offered some great inspiration for this one."

MYFX TITLE: The Scarecrow
WINNER: Matt Cornforth (Riox)
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/riox

"I loved this challenge because it enabled me to open up my darker side. I did something different with my scarecrow, giving his skin a more human appearance to show that he's alive. The billhook was an afterthought to finish off the sinister look. After designing this bloke I wouldn't walk down the footpath by my house for a week."

MYFX TITLE: Planet of the Apes
WINNER: Dave Brasgalla
GALLERY: www.imaginefx.com/dave_brasgalla

"For this challenge, I was again searching for a way to come at the brief obliquely. As I considered the ideas of power and rank, I thought of an Ape King so secure in his position that he can laze about while his underlings do all the heavy lifting. I painted the image quite rapidly in ArtRage, with just a scribbled thumbnail of the pose for a starting point, trying to keep the brushwork lively and loose."

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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You read my mind

The most amazing thing happened. About a week or two before ImagineFX issue 78 came out, I had literally just discovered the artwork of Mucha. I fell in love with his work. Low and behold, while looking at issue 77's Next Month page, I saw it was going to be Art Nouveau. I was floored – and scared. Is my mind that strong? (Cue the Twilight Zone theme music playing in the background.) Thanks for this edition!
Gregory, via email

Claire replies Your mind is that strong Gregory! Thanks for giving us the idea to do Mucha. Let us know what we're up to next at your earliest convenience...

Inspiring Art Nouveau

Many thanks for both the article on Alphonse Mucha and the workshop based on Arthur Rackham in issue 78. I've been a fan of both artists' work for a long time and it was both entertaining and inspirational to see how current artists can adapt their styles to the modern world (though I never dreamed I'd ever see Iron Man as a Mucha centrepiece!).

So, issue 78 certainly divided opinion. Was it an inspiration-packed dream come true, or did it resemble a senior's romance novel?

DID YOU MISS ISSUE 79?
We've still got a few copies left, but you need to move fast! See page 85 for details on how to get hold of one.

In issue 78 Sean Andrew Murray showed how to capture that magical, mixed-media look of Arthur Rackham's timeless fantasy illustrations.

While on the subject of past masters, I've just been to see the Apocalypse exhibition at Tate Britain, featuring the astounding works of the 19th century painter John Martin. While I'm sure that many of your readers will already be familiar with his work, there may be many others who would benefit from an introduction. Any chance of a feature or workshop in a future issue?

I'm a recent convert to ImagineFX. As a 50-plus-year-old drawing beginner taking to drawing and painting as a hobby when I have some spare time, I'm finding the magazine a rich source of good advice. Sketchbook is usually the first place I go to. As a beginner, it's easy to see great images and believe that they just happen, but seeing the creative process and half-formed ideas coming through in initial rough sketches is really beneficial (but missing from the majority of art tutorial books). Keep up the good work!
Michael Goff, via email

Claire replies Thanks Michael, I'll certainly keep John Martin in mind and I hope that you enjoyed our feature on Howard Pyle this month. Readers, are there any other past master artists that you'd like us to revisit?

Art Nouveau a stretch

Just had to pop off about the choice of cover this month. Art Nouveau was a stretch. It looks like a magazine for knitting hobbyists or a senior's romance novel. Yikes, the colours are nauseating.

My apologies, I had to get that off my chest. Thank you for an otherwise awesome magazine.
Loyal Subscriber, via email

Claire replies Well, you win some and you lose some! Can't please everyone all of the time. Thanks for your comments, Loyal Subscriber. What do you other readers think?

"You had me at page one"

It was a perfect day. My wife and I had gone out for dinner on a Friday evening in the town of Valparaiso (US), where wonderful restaurants abound. I was in need of a steak. We sat, ate and laughed at our week. Have you ever had a day when the mood of the whole day seemed to flow into the next? This was that day.

We left the restaurant and headed for our final destination of the evening, Barnes & Noble. I headed to my normal starting point, music production magazines, to see what was new. "Nothing, as usual," I thought to myself. My next stop, however, changed everything. Behind and in between the PS3 and Xbox magazines I saw a face. I reached down, moved the magazines, and looked at it. A woman reaching out toward me. She had fairies floating around her. The title read ImagineFX. It was issue one! I stood there looking at the cover for five minutes! My wife came around the corner and I showed it to her smiling. She said, "It finally happened for you." She remembered how I had been dreaming about the day a true artist magazine came into existence. On this day, this perfect day, it was love at first sight. Thank you so much for the work you put into this magazine! I have them all! Good day to you.
Damond Harper, via email

Claire replies Damond, funnily enough your experience of reading the first issue of ImagineFX is very similar to mine (although, sadly I didn't have a great steak dinner beforehand!). When I picked up issue one, I couldn't believe that all of these artists had converged in one place, it was like I had opened a door onto another world I didn't even know existed. I started working on ImagineFX by issue three. Thanks so much for your letter. It really made my day.

Artist Q&A

GOT A QUESTION FOR OUR EXPERTS? LET US EASE YOUR ART-ACHE AT HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM

Blood seeps into a shallow well-lit pool of water, so we can see a lot of vibrant red, as well as streams flowing out from the main mass into a floor drain.

Question
How do I paint blood seeping through water?
Daniel Horsburgh, Australia

Answer
Cynthia replies

I find that a good way to think about the shapes created by a submersed mass of blood is in terms of three things: clouds, blooms and tendrils.

The main body of blood is similar to the shape of a cloud and the blooms that come off are masses of blood that have already become more integrated with the water. Tendrils, meanwhile, are drops of blood that are getting carried away from the main cloudy mass by water movement.

Blood is more viscous than water, so it tends to slowly curl and grow out from the source, rather than disperse quickly and evenly to make coloured water. When a shark attacks someone in the ocean, for example, the victim's blood tends to hover

Once you paint some blooms of blood with a big Soft brush, use a Hard brush to erase along one side to create the look of wispy trails.

in one spot like an oil slick for a while before it fully disperses.

It seems to concentrate itself in one spot until the movement of the water carries it further and further away from the source. When water has a current in a specific direction, like the light pull being caused by the drain in the example, the blood closest to the current will get pulled away from the cloud in a long tendril.

Depending on the setting, blood can appear very dark – almost black – when it's highly concentrated. When blood is seeping through water in a shallow, well-lit pool like the one in my image above, the blood would be thin enough to retain its bright red colour as it fans out, getting brighter toward the edges.

Step-by-step:
Painting a trail of blood through water
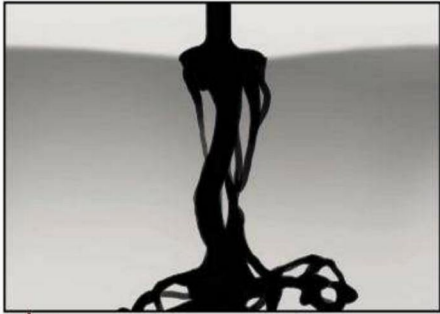
1 When painting a drop or trail of blood in water, start with the shape of the stream. Think of the shape as having a central column, with rings of liquid coming out from the centre. As a general rule, you can use drops of dye or India ink as a reference for what the blooming shapes beneath the surface would look like.

2 If you've created your shape on its own layer, select Lock Transparent Pixels in your Layers menu, then use Fill to flood the shape with red. At its thickest spots, the colour of blood tends to be close to true red (at the top of the Color Slider in the Color Picker). As the blood thins out, it moves towards red-orange.

3 Add tendrils and patches of thin blood around the central column. You can paint the tendrils by hand, or use the Smudge tool to create wisps floating in the water. Using a big Soft Round brush on a Multiply layer at 50 per cent Opacity, add some blooms of red-orange thin blood around the column to complete the effect.

Question
How can I paint a field of grass without it looking flat and dull?
Alice McDaid, Scotland

It helps to have characters and other background elements complement your field; elements that are the same size, but receding in distance, really help to expand the space into the image.

Answer
Jonathan replies

At the risk of stating the obvious: put things in it. You do need some elements to give the grass and the field scale. If you paint a huge expanse of monotone colour and texture, it will quickly look boring.

There are two ways to divide the monotony of your field; give the grass itself some shape and add some rolling bumps to the ground. Unless you're painting a golf course, a field will naturally have rolling ups and downs to it. If you make individual stalks of grass visible to the viewer, you give them something to judge scale by and the reduction of size in the blades of grass will help you articulate distance.

Adding other elements, like a collapsed wall and line of bushes, really help to break up any monotony. Linear objects, like a line of trees, a stream or a fence, can also help you to add depth by having these identifiable, repeating elements march off into the distance. Pay attention to your lighting, too. Grass tends to look more interesting after it has rained; if the light can catch water resting on top of a select few blades, it can add some gloss. Casting shadows onto the grass also helps to break it up a lot and can assist in fleshing out the uneven surface of the ground.

Artist's secret
LONG GRASSES

All of the blades of grass are bending in the same direction and so, coupled with some billowing cloaks and rain, the viewer gets a good idea of how windy it is in this scene.

Question
How do I draw face proportions in profile?
Marianne Jordan, England
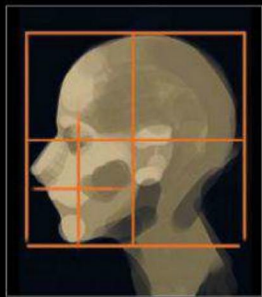
In a profile portrait there's almost no possibility of eye contact, so you must play with the light and details to catch the viewer's attention.

Answer
Mélanie replies

Drawing a face in profile isn't that complicated, but it's quite different than painting a portrait that's face-on. The proportions are the same, it's just the placement of the features that you must consider.

The first thing to do is to quickly sketch the base of the face. Imagine it as a square: the nose and the back of the head are the left/right extremities and the chin and top of the head are the top/bottom extremities.

Once this is looking okay, almost half the job is done – all you have to do next is to place the eye and the mouth. The eye should be on the middle horizontal line, and the mouth placed on the upper part of the bottom square. It might help to draw those lines over your sketch, but don't stick too much to them: they're only meant to be a guide.

The other important factor is the volume. If the light and shadows aren't correctly placed then the character will look weird, so after thinking about lines consider the shapes. Here in my sketch the light comes from the top, so I add light on four main areas: the forehead, nose, cheek and chin, which are the parts of the face that contain the most edges and angles.

Artist's secret
REFRESH YOUR EYES
This is a very simple tip that I always follow: I flip my image horizontally and work the illustration on this new position. This way I instantly see the mistakes, especially anatomical ones that you might not notice after working for hours on the same painting.

Question
What's the best brush for painting skin?
James Collins, Wales

This quick painting from life was done with very basic large Round brushes. Brushstrokes are easily seen on the legs and torso.

This is the Brush Settings window. Other settings that need to be on are Other Dynamics>Opacity Jitter set to Pen Pressure, and Smoothing.
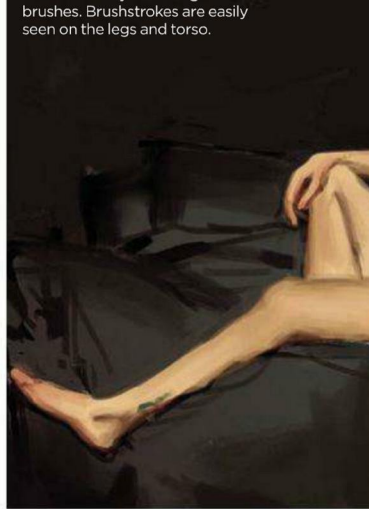
Answer
Karla replies

Digital artists use a variety of brushes for all kinds of textures and effects, but when painting skin I always use the basic Round brush.

In Photoshop's Brush window you can adjust the edges of brushes. Doing this turns the Round brush into a very versatile tool. Need to paint softer areas like the face of a young woman? Simply reduce the hardness of the brush to about 50 per cent. For areas of the body that require harder edges, such as kneecaps or elbows, you can use a Round brush with the hardness setting to 100 per cent.

Keep in mind the size of the brush. I usually paint with a brush that's larger than what I think I need, to prevent noodling on a specific area. I won't paint with a smaller brush until all my general shapes are established. This is my personal preference for brush set-up, of course. As long as you apply proper lighting, form and edges to your figure, you can really use any brush!

Question
Have you got any advice for taking a greyscale painting into colour?
Mark Kenworthy, US

Answer
Lauren replies

Many artists find it much easier to start with their values and add colour later. It's a very simple approach to take, although working on the necessary layer mode might take some practice.

If you look at the Layer Palette window in Photoshop, the Layer Mode drop-down menu displays Normal by default. Clicking this menu brings up more than a dozen options. For adding colour to a greyscale image, select Color near the bottom. Several other options could work, but the Color mode preserves the integrity of your colours the best. You can work on multiple layers and won't run into any odd saturation issues like you would with other modes.

Before you begin to add colour, it makes sense to prep your greyscale image first. Avoid pure blacks and whites; the colour won't affect those areas if the contrast is too extreme. If, while you're at the colouring stage, you discover an area of your artwork that's too dark or blown-out, use either the Lasso tool and Contrast Balance, or the Dodge and Burn tools, to edit the greyscale layer appropriately.

Question

I want to inject a sense of movement into my character's actions? Can you help?

Karl Miller, US

Answer
Jonathan replies

There are plenty of approaches available to you for adding movement into a painting. Many of them seek to replicate the effect of motion blur from photography, as our eyes have become accustomed to recognising this as recorded movement. Other techniques are derived from comic books, such as lines of motion or doubling or tripling imagery to give a sense of speed.

In this painting, using Painter Classic, I've tried to rely on some other trickery. I deliberately exaggerated the expressions and poses of both characters and, despite the clarity of the image, I have filled the foreground with drops of blood and sweat. The arrangement of these drops helps me to articulate a line of motion to the viewer, without adding one to the image. I could have blurred the character's fists, or added lines to describe motion, but instead I've attempted to create motion in the viewer's eye.

Even the shape of the rotunda behind the boxers helps to draw the eye along the trajectory of the punch. If the viewer's eye has to track the motion of the sequence of events, then they can play the scene in their imagination, adding the necessary movement as they do so.

I deliberately made the composition complicated, making the eye work a bit harder; it means the eye is forced to move around the image more than if things were easily readable.
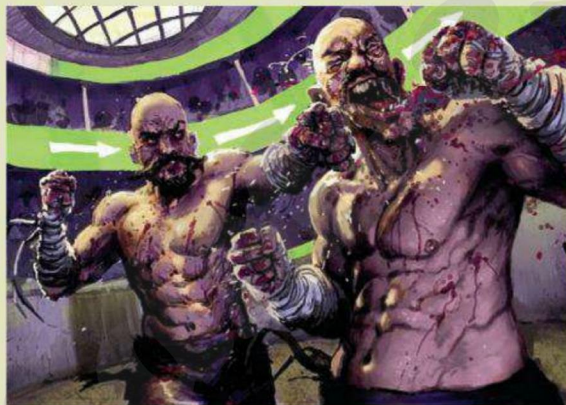
Even the shape of the background contributes to demonstrating the motion in the character.

Artist's secret
EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS

Not only does adding flying drops of motion give the scene movement, it really helps to add depth. Having the blood and sweat hang in the air, in front of the fighters adds another layer that the image otherwise wouldn't have.

Step-by-step: Bring life to a grey image

1 Start by painting your greyscale image. Add in all of the texture and detail you want the final painting to have here. The colour is essentially just tinting this greyscale original, so put as much work into it as you need. Flatten when you're done, and lock the layer.
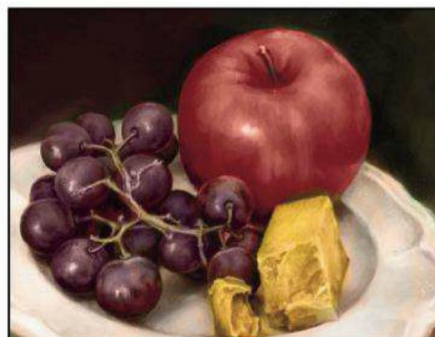
2 Create a new layer and set the layer mode to Color. Before you go any further, lay down a 100 per cent opacity coat over the entire image to act as an under-painting colour. Then go in and start adding base colours to each part or object within the image.

3 The last step is to refine the colours until you're happy. Use your normal blending brush and technique to build up additional colour variation and detailing where you need it. Remember how colour shifts from mid-tone to shadow; this will keep your final image from looking flat.

Question
Can you help me paint light on a bright day?
Daniel Hecker, Germany

Answer
Karla replies

Painting bright, natural light throws up its own unique problems and solutions. There are some key ideas to get a handle on, but the main ones are the relationship between light and shadow, as well as how light reacts to different surfaces and colours.

A bright, sunny day means that the light is going to be very intense. The intensity of this light will be in relation to the intensity of the shadow. In other words, the stronger the light the darker the shadow. The opposite is also useful for painting light in overcast scenes. As such, the dimmer the light, the closer the shadows will be to the value of the light.

Another thing I like to keep in mind is when light hits a surface it'll either bounce off it or become absorbed. Keep in mind two things: the type of surface and the colour of the surface. A smooth surface, such as a mirror, will bounce light at the same angle the light is coming from. A bumpy surface – say, stone – will bounce light all over the place irregularly as the light hits the uneven, pitted surface.

As with surfaces and the relationship between light and shadow, there's a simple rule of thumb to remember when painting light hitting a coloured surface. Essentially, when dealing with painting light on a coloured surface keep in mind that if a warm light hits a warm surface, it'll make that surface look more saturated, whereas if a warm light hits a cool surface, the light will be neutralised and vice versa.

Painting light, especially natural light on a bright sunny day, can seem daunting at first, but by remembering the keys rules I've outlined here you should experience no major problems. Have fun!

In my painting here you can see the direct relationship between the intensity of light and intensity of shadow.

Artist's secret
BE CONSISTENT

If your goal is to paint sunny light, make sure the relationship between light and shadow are consistent throughout your painting. This means no areas that are bright and sunny, while others that are crazily diffused, like an overcast day!
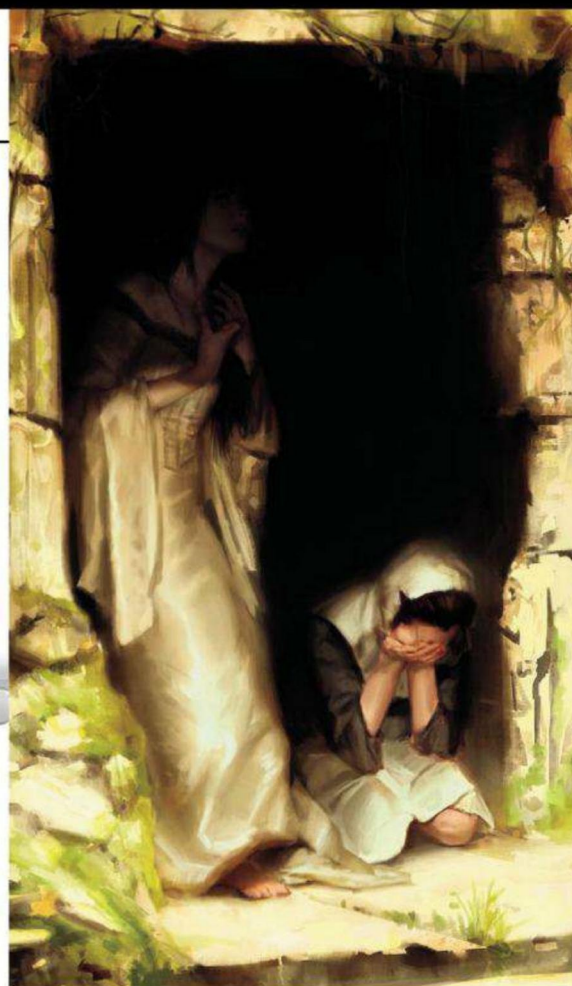
Step-by-step: Give your paintings a harsh, bright light
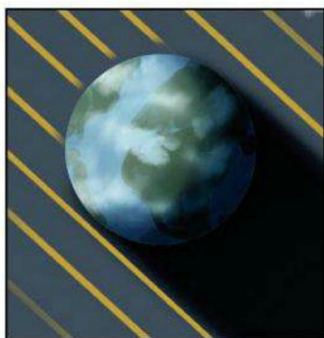
1 The sun is so large that its rays can cover the Earth and not change direction. On a sunny day, if you're outside and the sun is your main light source, the direction of the light can be represented by sets of parallel lines. The light travels in a uniform direction and its path is predictable. I always like to keep a layer with these lines as a reminder of the direction of the light.
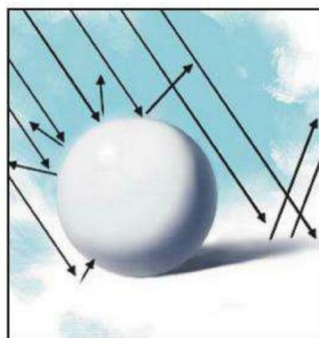
2 Here, using the parallel lines, I give light to this white ball. If you follow the direction of the rays of light (represented by arrows), you'll notice where the bounce light is affecting the ball. Both the shadow and reflected light in shadow are affected by the blue in the background, in a similar manner to how the blue of the sky reflects in shadows and bounced light.
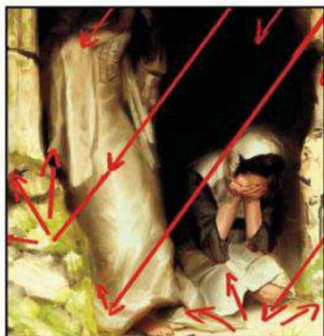
3 Early in my paintings I like to create layers with arrows representing the direction of the light. They help me visualise where the light and shadows will be. For example, here I find where the doorway casts its shadow by adding an arrow with the direction of the light, and following it from the top of the doorway to the point it meets the woman.

4 Here's a detail of the painting. The arrows help me find where the light would hit the top of her cowl and skirt. Both my light and my surfaces are warm and uneven, so I know it would be a great moment for a soft, diffused light bounce that adds visual interest. Following the arrows enables me keep the lighting in these areas of the painting consistent and realistic.

Your questions answered...

Question
How can I maintain accurate perspective in my painting?
Marcus Cottman, US
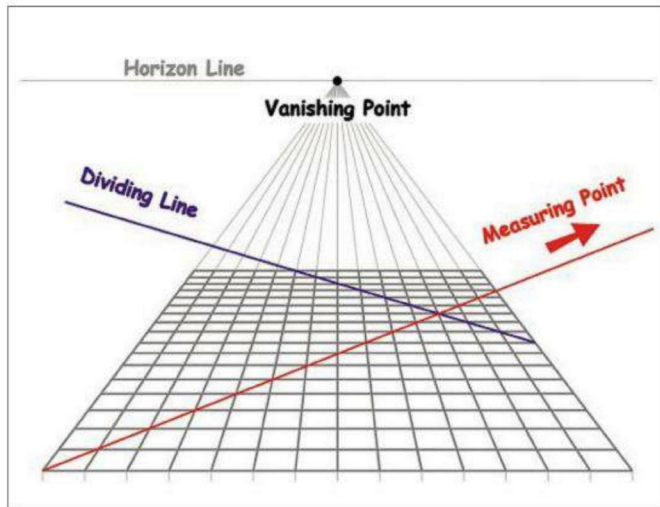
Any line that crosses diagonally through a square creates a dividing line, which is perfect for extending the grid without having to draw off the page.

Answer
Bill replies

The simple answer is that you need to create your own perspective grid. The first line I draw is a straight horizontal line across the page, known as the horizon. It represents the eye-level of the viewer and it's at this line that all objects in the distance disappear.

The next thing I establish in the image is the vanishing point. This is the point where all linear lines from the foreground converge at the horizon at a single point (think of railway lines disappearing into the distance until they meet at one spot). With this in mind I draw a line at the bottom of the page and divide it into equal units. From each point I draw a line back to the vanishing point, until I have something that looks like a ploughed field disappearing into the distance.

I now draw a line from the first unit (bottom left) at an angle so that it meets a point at the horizon at the far right (the measuring point). Finally, where the new line intersects the other lines I draw a straight line for each intersect to create the grid in perspective.

There's nothing like a perspective grid to bring out the 70s 3D retro in an artist. It's just one example for using a perspective grid.

Question
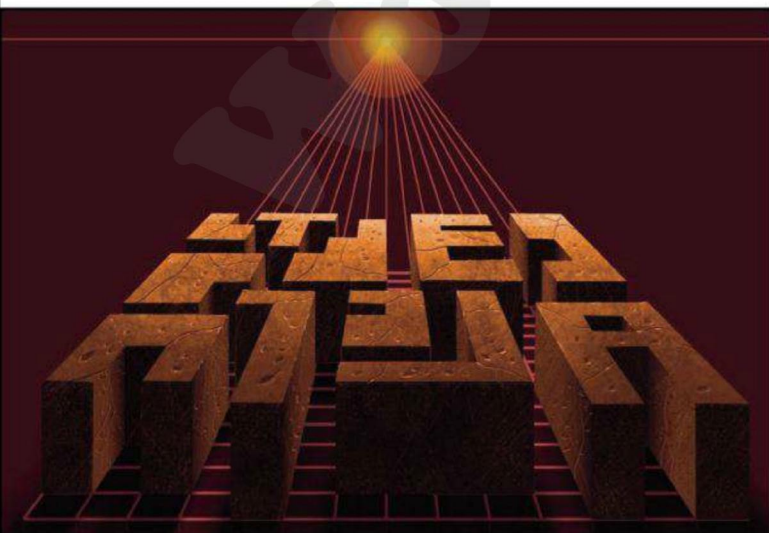### How does cloud cover affect a bright moon in a painting?
Derrick Park, Singapore

Answer
Lauren replies

Clouds are always about how you handle the combination of softness and detail. The basic mistake with any kind of cloud is to make it too airbrushed and misty. In the case of a bright moon, where the clouds will be strongly backlit, it's crucial to commit to edges, shapes, textures and colour shifts.

Start by blocking in the sky and moon without the clouds, then add the clouds on a new layer with a good 'cloud brush' – a fluffy, textured brush that creates organic shapes. By varying the size of a brush like this, and switching up your colours, you can create a great base for your clouds in very little time. Then add in details and edges where necessary.

Remember the moon's light radiates outwards and will light the sky around it accordingly. Also remember that clouds are vaporous, not opaque. The light will shine through with different strengths all over the cloud's form. Most importantly, use artistic licence to prevent the sky from looking too busy or crowded.

Shape, texture and contrast are all important in painting clouds in a dramatic lighting situation, such as in a moonlit sky.

Question
I want to give my paintings a bitterly cold feel. Can you help?
Marianne Bird, US

Answer
Nick replies

First you need to decide what sort of cold it is? Is it, for example, an Arctic crispness with crystal clear air, or freezing fog that suffocates light? Next, look for images to inspire you, and then begin painting. I select a cool colour palette, with a blue/grey bias. Pockets of contrasting warmth can help reinforce the feeling of cold.

This scene falls somewhere between Arctic chill and freezing fog. I flood-fill the canvas with a mid-tone blue and, using ArtRage Pro, I select a paper texture I think will aid atmosphere, adjusting Grain Size and Roughness to suit.

Guided by the drawing, I block in shapes in blue tones before introducing other hues with watercolour washes. Next, I build up texture, colour and tone with a combination of washes and solid details over and over again. I try to introduce colours in light areas to emphasise blue/cold shadows.

Finally, I look to exploit details such as frosting, icicles and visible exhalations from live creatures. I add misty elements using the Chalk tool, for a more crystalline feel, then soften edges using the Palette knife.

The light from the fridge is a light shade of green, but it appears warm compared to the overall blue cast of the scene.

ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
How do I paint a vertigo-inducing scene?
Cathy Hammond, US

Answer
Cynthia replies

A painting featuring dizzying height requires exaggerating the distance between the viewer and the ground, putting the farthest-away element right next to the closest one. One of the best ways to achieve this effect is using three-point perspective. This is a technique often used in comics when the artist is rendering a city or group of objects from a very high, or very low, vantage point.

In my example here, you see a pair of feet – the viewer's – standing on an edge, which looks directly down over a tiny cross-section of traffic, from an almost straight up-and-down aerial view. I also use atmospheric perspective – the principle that things become cooler in hue and more muted as they recede further into the distance – to enhance the feeling of being up high. Being able to see where the sky meets the horizon helps us feel like we're looking down on the landscape from a greater distance.

Finally, the effect is completed by applying Radial Blur with the centre point aligned on the focal area at the street intersection, making it look like we're almost falling over the edge and creating a sense of dizzy unease.

Looking straight down from an aerial perspective creates the feeling that the viewer could fall to their demise at any time.

Artist's secret
AT THE WORLD'S END
If you want to further exaggerate the appearance of height from the top of a tall structure, curve the horizon line in the distance. Because the earth is spherical, the horizon appears more dramatically curved the further up you travel.
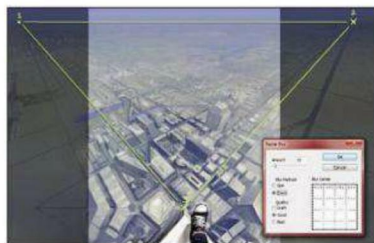
Add two points on the horizon line and one point below to employ three-point perspective. Then add Radial Blur with Zoom set to 10 per cent.

Question
Any ideas for selecting a complementary colour range?
Michael Rocastle, England
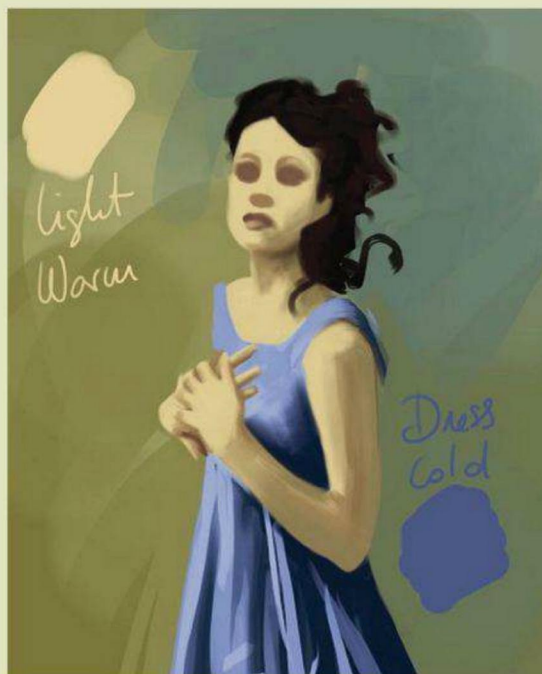
My colours are determined by the mood I want for my image, so I try to mix everything – cold, warm, something in between – with the story I want to tell.

Answer
Mélanie replies

To choose the complementary colours of my colour scheme, I always try to play with the warm/cold contrast, instead of using a traditional colour wheel. I usually pick it right after choosing the main colour, at the very beginning of the painting process.

In my example here, the base colour is a warm yellow and the main light is yellow too, so to contrast the composition and make the character stand out I choose a vibrant (cold) blue. This colour will bring balance to the composition.

However, I still find the composition flat, so I decide to add another hue, which will be the second light source. I go for a very pale green because I want to give a dreamy feeling to the piece, and again this cold colour will contrast with the main light source.

If you're totally lost, the Color Picker can be a very helpful tool; its RGB options can give you some ideas for choosing your colour. My final tip is to always test your chosen colours first on a corner of the illustration, to see if they match.

The Color Picker helps me choose the pale green. I often use this tool when I need to unify the colours.

Question
How should I draw a spiral staircase?
Glen Poulson, US

Answer
Bill replies

The method I'm explaining here can be used to draw a spiral staircase at any angle and at any size, and although simple, the only thing that's really required is patience and a good knowledge of perspective.

The principle of drawing the staircase is based on a linear template; a circle drawn in a square with another smaller circle drawn within the larger circle. The outer circle is then divided into segments to create the steps of the staircase.

With this template I can create a stack of layers to represent each step of the staircase. Imagine a stack of cakes where only one slice from each cake can be seen. Each slice is placed in sequence around the central axis (essentially a staircase).

It's worth noting that a circle is traditionally drawn within a square, because a circle in perspective is actually an ellipse. The edges that touch the sides of the square will do so in the same places in the perspective view.

A square is also useful for creating the guidelines for drawing each level of the staircase in perspective. As such, it's a good idea to have a smaller square for the inner circle, too.

Another thing to note is that when using a perspective grid to create the first square it's important to remember to divide the square horizontally, vertically and diagonally. This will create the first eight segments for the staircase for you and make it easier to divide the circle into additional segments. Time and care will certainly reward you here!
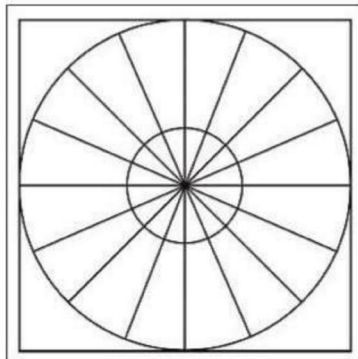
The template is the key to getting the staircase drawing accurate in perspective. In simple terms, it's like looking down on a tube within a tube.

Here's a creepy turret in an old castle. The work put into getting the perspective right will certainly pay for itself when you draw your staircase.

Step-by-step: Draw a spiral staircase and maintain correct perspective

1 Using the vector tools in PaintShop Pro I create a large square using a perspective grid and a smaller square at its centre. I then divide the square into eight parts and establish the centre, where I draw the inner and outer ellipses. I create additional segments then draw in the guide needed for adding the next layer. This creates the first step of the staircase.
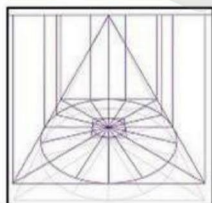
2 I establish the size of the first step by recreating the template above on a new layer. The perspective will be different for this plane, so I must use the guides I created earlier to keep the drawing accurate. I repeat the process on new layers for each step. I then draw in each segment as I go along to keep a check on the consistency.
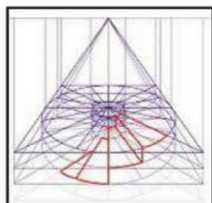
3 Once I've got the required amount of layers I finish off the steps by using the template to guide me with the perspective. The central pillar could be a void space with a banister, but I've opted to keep it solid for this piece. It's possible to continue taking the staircase up (or down), but for painting purposes I now have a drawing of a spiral staircase.
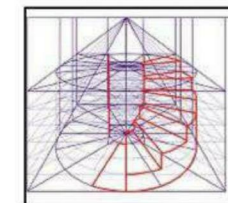
" To make a good painting,
I need to be able to believe
it. The expressions are
vital to this – it's how
we communicate at basic
and complex levels "

The art of
PAUL BONNER

This artist paints expressive, boundless fantasy art – and
manages to make monsters look distinctly personable

W hen Paul Bonner paints a fantasy monster, he takes the details and expressions to another level. Flick through his book Out of the Forests, which collects together some of his finest pieces, and you'll quickly notice how well he employs knitted brows and snarling lips to bring a tangible level of threat to his trolls, orcs and goblins.

These deformed dwellers of darkness, with their wild whiskers, huge horns, warty snouts and jagged teeth aren't just saying they're going to kill you. They're ready to tear you limb from limb. But there's lightness in there too, meaning they'll probably joke about it with their friends later.

Whereas many a human warrior has taken a wolf's skull to make for an

CONFRONTATION
Paul conveys depth in his paintings that makes the images come to life, forcing his characters from the confines of the picture's borders.

imposing battle helm, Paul's ogre is just one example of a monster who'll go ten steps further. He charges into battle with a mastodon's head balanced atop his bulky, twisted and utterly fearsome body. The posture and facial expressions of the artist's characters tell you what they're about, and what they're capable of doing.

"To make a good painting, I need to be able to believe it," explains Paul. "The expressions are vital to this – it's how

"If it's all too pre-planned and worked out to the last detail, then there's no room for the happy accidents and unexpected discoveries that often lead to the most satisfying moments, and arrive to give a bit of spontaneity and life to a painting."

© Wizards of the Coast

ROC
Paul's colours, tones and details make even the most fantastical creature appear real.
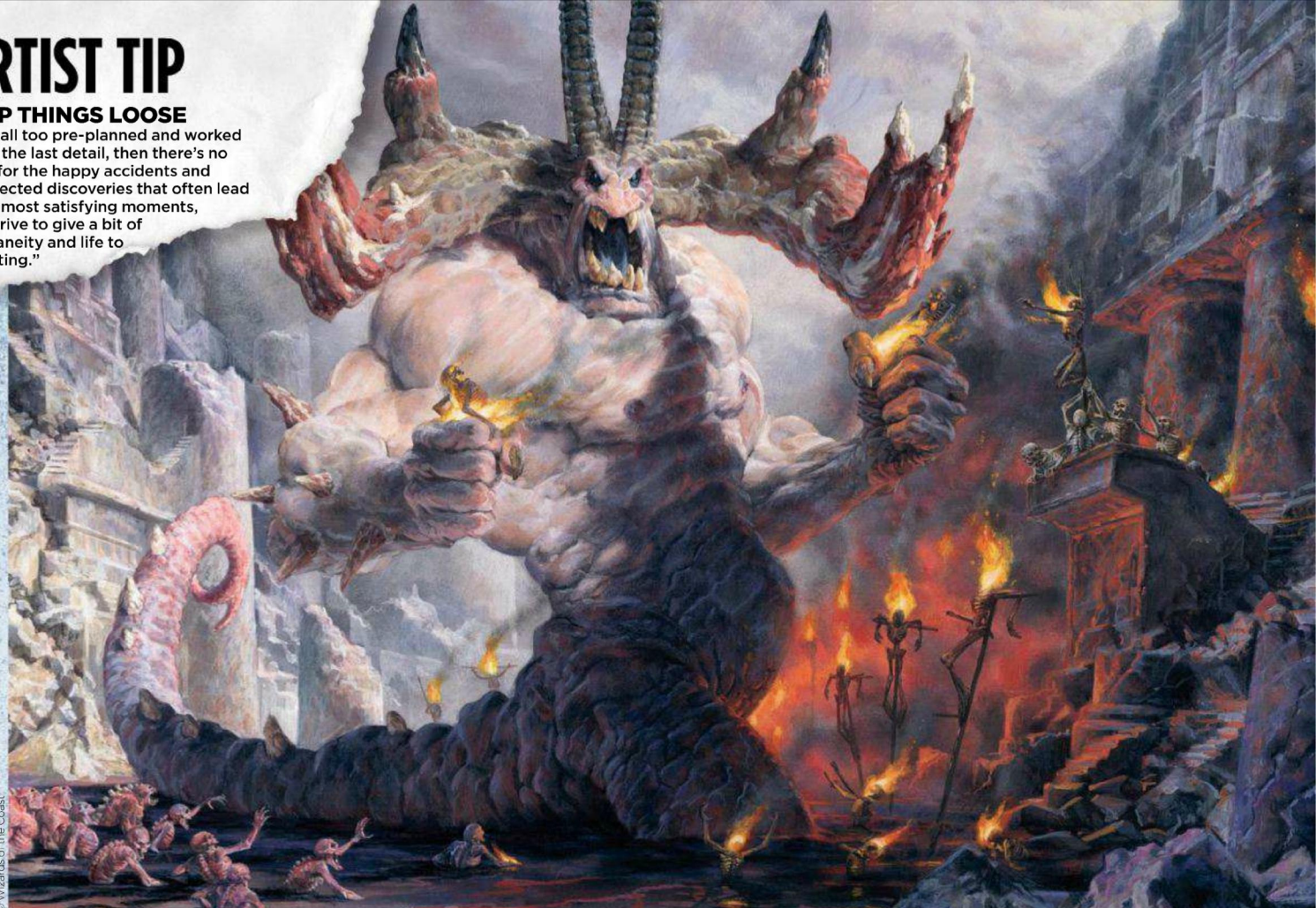
© Wizards of the Coast

we communicate at basic and complex levels. So the characters have to show some inner workings, something that hopefully gives a little window into the soul. I suppose to a certain extent the moment dictates what they are feeling and thus their expression and body language. Then it's up to me trolling through the subconscious back catalogue and drawing on a few decades' worth of big noses, jagged teeth, glinting eyes and gnarled fingers."

Born in Yorkshire, Paul grew up in north-west London and studied illustration at Harrow College before embarking on his professional career. When Games Workshop was in its early years, he spent a few years working for them in Nottingham, but eventually his job led him to Copenhagen where he now lives and works.

With its Norse heritage, it's the ideal location for someone who loves painting scenes from Ragnarok (the cataclysmic finale to the Norse epics), and creating Tolkienesque monsters.

SMALL BEGINNINGS

For him, each painting begins with a series of scribbles and sketches – little freeze frames that explore the characters, their environment and the compelling parts of the narrative. The reasons behind the characters and what they're doing are established. "So then on to more pages of terrible scribbles trying to find positions for them, with corresponding anatomy to make their body language both readable and believable," Paul explains.

Eventually it'll boil down to a final drawing on watercolour paper, which is soaked under the tap and taped down to board. Then the painting begins and he masks off the figures and freestyles the background, which is rarely part of the sketch. It begins loosely and gains resolution as he paints.

"I use watercolours, but use them as you would acrylics or gouache from the tube, mixing on the palette with a bit of water. Layers are constantly reworked, disturbed and given washes till not much of the under-painting survives," Paul continues.

The rare instances of bright colour in his work are built up on white gouache, usually as final touches. The artist's inclination is

GRIXIS FAT PACK DEMON
Paul draws on Scandinavian, Celtic, Chinese and even Aztec culture when creating his creatures. "I love that it's grounded in something which maybe causes a subconscious response in the viewer," he says.

towards the heavier and earthier tones in his paintings. This seems to give his work the weight and depth that backs up the menace expressed in the beady eyes and grimaces of his monsters.

FABLES, FOLKLORE AND FROUD

During his childhood, Paul absorbed folk stories, fairy tales and mythology, and discovered The Hobbit with its dwarves, trolls and goblins. His family would holiday in the Lake District in the north-west of England, where the hills, forests and mountains seemed the perfect realm for such creatures to live. Mixing his own

PAUL BONNER
VITAL STATISTICS
"Paint what you love"

Date of birth
1958.
Place of birth
Yorkshire, England.
Current location
Copenhagen, Denmark.
Favourite artists
John Bauer, Ivan Shishkin, Ilya Repin, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, Jean Baptiste Monge, W Heaton-Cooper, Alvarro Tapia, Gerome, Stalingrad and Anthony Beevor.
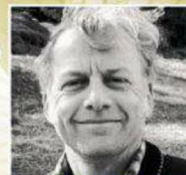
Favourite animals
Tiger, for sheer beauty. Elk or moose. Countless others – nature's the biggest and best influence.
Favourite place
The Lake District, England.
Current project
My own painting for entry into Spectrum 19.
Web address
www.paulbonner.net
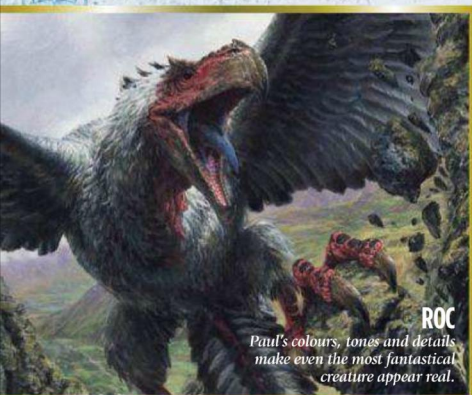
TELLING STORIES

Paying close attention to the smallest detail and gesture ensures that Paul's paintings carry an enviable impact

Story is key to Paul's images and this piece for Riotminds, called Jarntunga, showcases his knack for eliciting emotion from the viewer. The troll is chained outside the gates of a city. It's put on show so the warriors within can boast and brag to any visitors walking under the gates.

"I knew the narrative I wanted so it was fun trying to get the expressions to tell the story," says Paul. The image reveals his attention to detail: notice how the troll "is wary of looking directly at the threatening dog," which picks up on how frightened animals shy away from looking directly at another animal. "I could have made it stronger, maybe, but it was interesting trying to show the troll somewhat cowed and introduce an air of pathos," recalls Paul.

Ever the perfectionist, Paul still sees room for improvement in a painting that others would envy. "Looking at it now," he says while studying the mood of the image, "I would change the lighting somewhat – more shadow and subdued tone with the main source shining coldly through the gate."

> ❝ It was interesting trying to show the troll somewhat cowed and introduce an air of pathos ❞

DAI-BAKEMONO
"Finding the tension of that specific moment where something is about to happen seduces the viewer into a relationship with the characters."

ASTROCLAW SPACE MARINE
Paul's found a spiritual home at Games Workshop where he spent a number of years, including work on Warhammer 40,000.

© Games Workshop

COMPELLED BY A HERO

Paul finds the rich language of the Beowulf saga hard to resist

Though very busy, Paul has begun work on his own project based on Beowulf, one of the first examples of fantasy horror storytelling that has all the ingredients a fantasy artist needs for inspiration: dragons, warriors, gold, caves, forests, hags, trolls...

"I guess there's a darkness suggested in the painting, but the things we're left to imagine can be the most worrying, so it's quite gentle really," explains Paul. There's plenty of

scope for more vivid horror in the rest of the story, and I look forward to try and capture that primordial terror that the tale so wonderfully portrays."

Paul says he usually steers clear of obvious action scenes when painting, but the story of Beowulf, which reminds him why he loves painting fantasy scenes, is "so compelling and dramatic that I am going to have to dive in and get my brushes dirty, so as to speak."

imagination with some of the standards of fantasy literature, he's developed his own take on a whole range of such creatures. He's practised painting many of the key fantasy species for many years now and they have the Bonner look about them.

"I know how I want my dwarves and goblins to look," he says. "I guess it's a huge cauldron of influences and inspirations seasoned with my own thoughts on how things look and behave. It goes back through to Walt Disney in my childhood, to countless books of folk tales and legends. On through Rackham, Bauer, Froud, Frazetta, Dulac and many Russian painters like Vasnetsov, Shishkin and Bilibin."

Paul still works for Games Workshop and has recently completed some figure designs for their Warhammer 40,000 gaming world. He's been working on World of Warcraft artwork, but his latest is a personal painting that he'll be submitting to Spectrum 19. Past clients include the

now-defunct fantasy and sci-fi games company FASA, and he contributed artwork to the gaming world of Mutant Chronicles as well.

Two of his favourite working relationships have developed during his time in Copenhagen. Paul's art is an important part of the game worlds created

HRIMOX
"I've always known what things I've wanted to paint – so when I get the chance to do just that, then my heart leaps and I really get lost in it."

" Beowulf is a classic tale that has everything an artist like me could wish for "

by the Swedish company Riotmind, which produces both online and boardgame adventures. Here, muscle-bound Viking-style warriors face off with dragons and trolls across snowy fjords, and in cave environments decorated with runes. Paul's appetite for painting in rich detail is clearly being satiated in this work.

"Riotminds wanted exactly the kind of paintings that I would sit and do for myself if paying the bills wasn't a necessity. It's a

Scandinavian world based on reality, where the inhabitants are living side by side with all my favourite characters from folklore. In those times people really did believe in their existence, so the mixture of fantasy, tinged with a need for believability was something perfect for me," he says.

Paul had a great understanding with the art director there, who didn't ask for roughs. The result has been images with plenty of the artist's own energy and ideas.

FRENCH CONNECTION
Paul's also worked with the French game publisher Rackham. Based around Ragnarok – among other things – games such as Confrontation revolve figurines of various characters and monsters. Again, the company trusted him and gave him complete freedom. "Some really talented people had already created amazing characters for me to play with. Rackham was a bit more extreme than Riotminds, so maybe a bit more challenging to make believable, but it was such an inspiration

seeing their characters that I simply couldn't wait to try and give them some life with a bit of colour and background."

Despite 30 successful years in the industry, Paul's workday is as long and busy as ever. Fantasy art has a much broader profile now than when he first started out and there are good and bad sides to this. "Now with the intertwined relationships of books, video games and films, it's absolutely everywhere and we're thoroughly spoilt for choice. I suppose I could risk saying that a lot of the work now is derivative as it needs to be more of an advert for something, rather than an individual interpretation."

At the moment, he's putting his own stamp on yet another fantasy epic – Beowulf (see Compelled by a Hero). "It's a different take on a classic tale that has everything an artist like me could wish for. I've just got to twist and bend it a bit so it fits the world as I'd want to do it," he says. "I'd love to do The Hobbit too, of course. No twisting and bending required. It's simply wonderful." ●

Artist
PROFILE
Calum Alexander Watt
COUNTRY: England

Calum, who's also known as salaryman on the internet, is a freelance storyboarder, concept artist and illustrator, working in the entertainment industry. Calum has created concepts for Disney and Sega and his comic work has appeared in 2000 AD and Image Comics. He lives and works in England, somewhere near the sea.
www.calumalexanderwatt.com

Calum Alexander Watt

With a slickness reserved for most artists' finished images, Calum's digital sketchbook is worth a closer look

RED MOON RISING

"While my work is completely digital these days, I've recently been dropping in photos of some simple watercolour swatches I've created. Here the moon helped to give an element of context to a quick character piece."

ATLATL

"The title refers to the throwing stick she carries. It's a sketch to evolve my approach to inking digitally. I did this in greyscale, with SketchBook Pro, with colours added in Photoshop."

THE LONG WALK

"An exploration into a more familiar surrounding... couldn't resist a little narrative content."

HEADGEAR

"Explorations in upgradeable/customisable headwear. No final character design had been approved at this time, so simple unrendered sketches were a good way of exploring the possibilities."

"Combining a few Adjustment layers can really push the colours and mood of a simple piece"

WALKING MECH

"Originally drawn in SketchBook Pro as greyscale, this image shows off the power of Photoshop's Adjustment layers. Combining a few can really push the colours and mood of a simple piece."

Sketchbook

MECH PILOT
"A lunchtime sketch exploring in more detail what a pilot for my mech designs would look like."

USB-BOT
"An image that simply emerged from the shapes I was drawing. I really pushed the Photoshop treatment to emphasise the robot's size."

WILD RIDERS 1
"These pieces were created for a racing game, using the wild animals to race on. I ended up doing more than 70 different treatments with no success – that's the nature of concepting. The approach and results of these are among my favourite work."

THE CORPSE KING

"Here I was trying to emulate a dry brush/watercolour stroke in SketchBook Pro."

"I did more than 70 different treatments with no success – that's the nature of concepting"

BUGS

"Inspired by a colleague's idea for a game, inked without undersketching, the four-armed pilot is still the most intriguing element here, for me."

RAIN MAN

"This came about as I simply wanted to draw an elephant which, up to this point, I had never attempted. I used SketchBook Pro and Photoshop."

CITY ON FIRE

"Another SketchBook Pro sketch polished with some adjustment layers in Photoshop to give a more completed piece."

Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**, or upload your drawings at **www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook**.

Howard Pyle

Dinotopia artist **James Gurney** takes us on a journey through Howard Pyle's art, influence and legacy

One frosty autumn day Howard Pyle brought his illustration students outdoors to find some hickory nuts. After they had gathered up the fallen harvest from alongside the banks of a millstream, they noticed more nuts resting on the stream bottom. "Well boys, there's only one way to get them," one of his students, Frank Schoonover, recalled him saying. Pyle then waded into the icy water to gather them.

The artist didn't allow the moment to pass without a lesson. "The poor soldiers at Valley Forge felt the cold, just as we feel the cold now," he said. "The ragged lot that marched against the Hessians at Trenton felt the icy water and the numbing cold and I don't believe it's possible to paint a picture of that sort within the four walls of your studio unless you feel the cold as they did."

In Pyle's illustration Washington and Steuben at Valley Forge (page 58) the ➤➤

THE ATTACK UPON THE CHEW HOUSE
This painting appeared in The Story of the Revolution by Henry Cabot Lodge, published in Scribners Magazine, 1898. Oil on canvas, 23.25x35.25in.

Artist PROFILE

Howard Pyle

Howard was born in Delaware, US, in 1855. He founded the Brandywine art school, mentoring many famous artists including NC Wyeth and was known for his pirate images. He died in Florence, Italy in 1911.

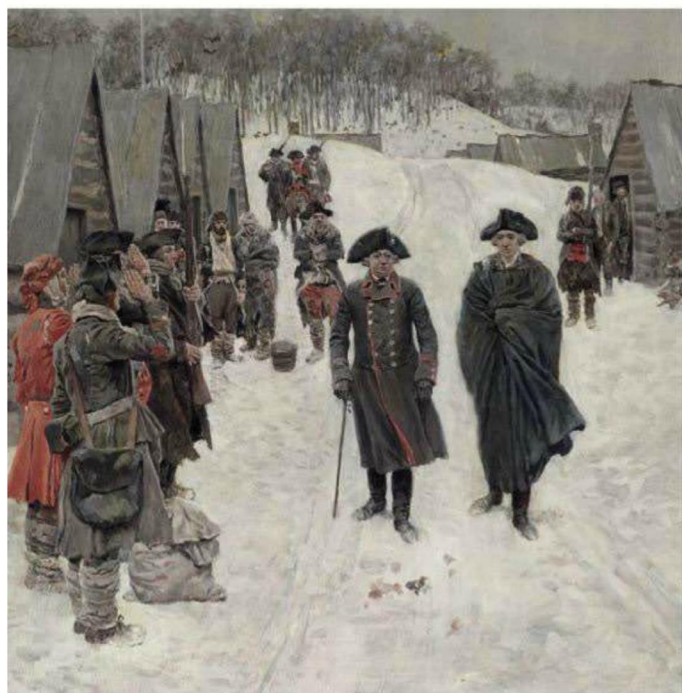**www.howardpyle.blogspot.com**

Howard Pyle Manuscript Collection

Delaware Art Museum, Museum Purchase, 1912

two leaders trudge through the snowy camp, as the soldiers give a desultory salute. The composition alternates dense clusters of figures with stark, empty expanses of snow and sky. The cold wind tugs at the hem of Washington's cloak.

MENTAL PROJECTION

One of Pyle's chief attributes was this quality of "mental projection": the ability to envision unseen worlds through the lens of direct experience. In Pyle's way of seeing, every object stands as a token for something unseen. "It's not the mere outward part – the part the eye sees – that holds the interest," Pyle remarked, "but what the soul feels." This principle was woven through his picture-making process: the initial sketch, the compositional design, the dramatic staging and the use of models.

Although Pyle didn't leave behind a systematic theory or method in his own

DEAD MEN TELL NO TALES
Pyle was intrigued by the way a picture told a story in a single impression, with all the clues leading up to a dramatic climax. Appeared in Collier's Weekly, 1899. Oil on canvas, 20.25x30.25in.

WASHINGTON AND STEUBEN AT VALLEY FORGE
This appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1896. Oil on canvas.

writings, many of his students kept notes of his spoken words. Thornton Oakley recalled: "During three years with him he didn't mention a word about materials, methods, mediums or techniques." Too much emphasis on technique, Pyle warned, would result in a kind of mannered overindulgence, where the means become more important than the message.

Pyle regarded the picture as a stage and figures as actors in a drama. He believed that the faces of the principle actors should

> ## During three years, Pyle didn't mention a word about materials, methods, mediums or techniques

be turned toward the audience, as in theatre, because, "dramatic art is nearest akin to our art." In his pictures the artist often kept the foreground relatively empty to focus attention on the central subject.

He advised his students: "If you receive only 50 cents for a job, put as much of your heart into it as you would in one you are receiving $500 for." In every story Pyle looked for what he called the "supreme moment," the phase of action that conveys the most suspense, often a fateful encounter or a moment of decision. When scenes of extreme action were called for, Pyle often chose to portray a moment just before or just after the peak of the action, believing that putting figures amid violent action is less dramatic. Every moment

depicted in his illustrations is plucked from a broader timeline of dramatic events. Pyle was always conscious of what came before and what came after the moment he portrayed. He left a series of clues in Dead Men Tell No Tales (above), which suggest the previous incidents leading to the dramatic cliff-hanger depicted. Indeed, Pyle's dramatic sensibilities influenced not only the field of illustration, but also the emerging motion-picture industry, as film directors translated stories of pirates, Robin Hood and American history to the art of the cinema in the 20th century.

Pyle painted some of his illustrations from his imagination and others with the benefit of posed models. The painting called In the Meadows of Youth (right) was based on a meticulous pencil study of a costumed model that showed every wrinkle, but the final painting is rendered with simple shapes and soft edges. Pyle never wanted fussy detail to take away from the larger poetic statement.

USE OF MODELS

Painting directly from posed models was a central part of his teaching. He wanted his students to study costumed models, since so few of the subjects they would

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PRELIMINARY SKETCHES
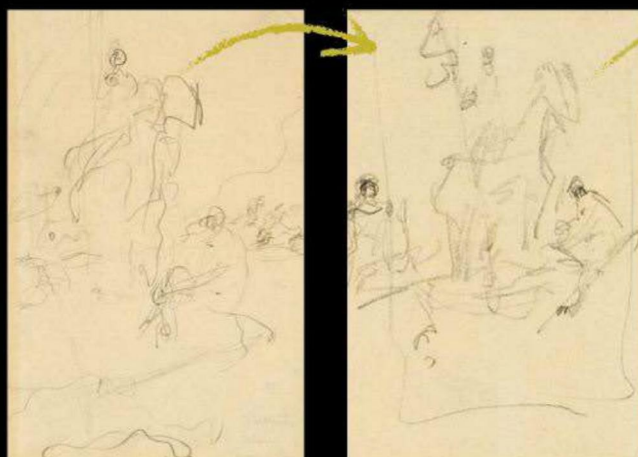### The initial concepting for The Coming of Lancaster shows Pyle's craft

When an idea for a picture began to germinate in Pyle's imagination, he made many thumbnail sketches in pen or pencil before he settled on the final design.

The sketches for The Coming of Lancaster show several tentative explorations of the subject in pencil. In each, the horse and rider emerge from what looks like an almost random doodle, with loose lines moving in and out of the form. Student Charles DeFeo recalled seeing a desk drawer filled with thousands of sketches. "If the first sketch looks like the one I want to do," said Pyle, "to make sure, I always make the other 49 anyway."

Sometimes the process of generating thumbnail sketches acquired an almost mystical intensity. Pyle once described the

feeling of an unseen hand guiding his own. His sketches give the impression of a fleeting vision snatched from the ether, or a half-remembered dream. Another student, Harvey Dunn, who became an influential teacher, called this stage the "pictorial concept", with the emphasis on defining the emotional or spiritual force behind the image and expressing it very simply.
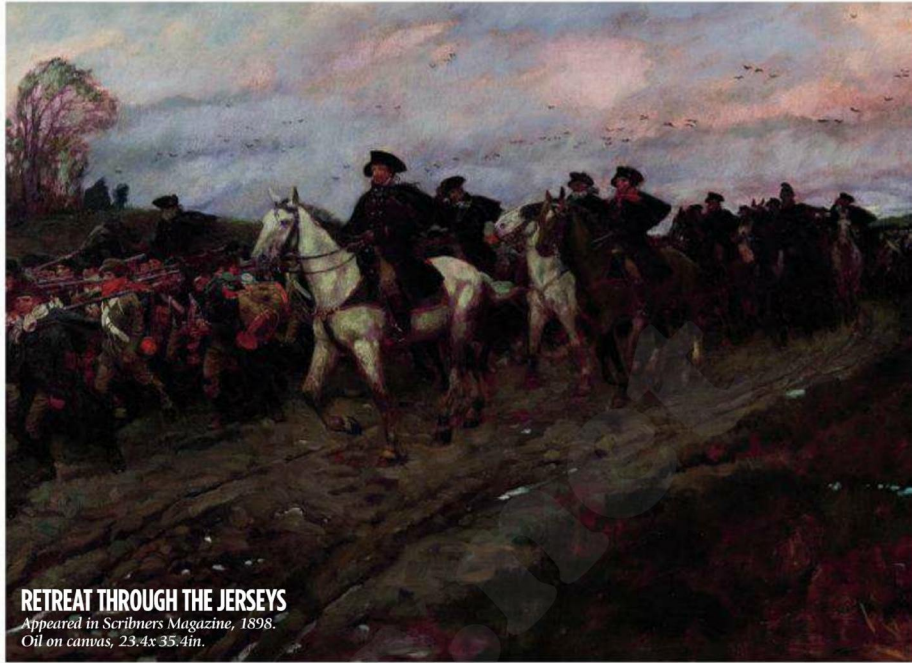
Pyle liked to think of picture ideas in elemental terms. When critiquing a railroad subject by one of his students, he advised imagining the train's engine as a monster: "A thing formed of the metals of the earth — moved by fire and water." It was vital that the picture express a single idea. A second idea, he told his students, weakens the picture by half; a third by a compound ratio.
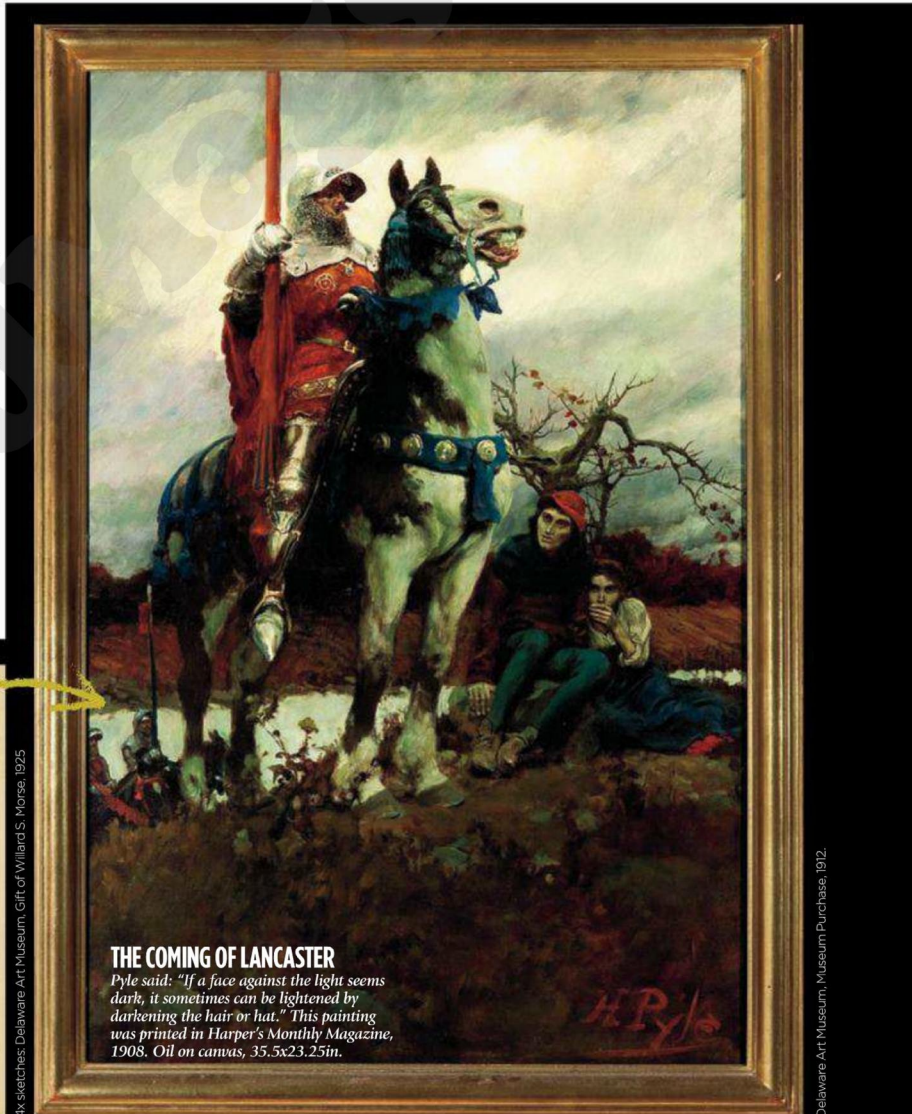
RETREAT THROUGH THE JERSEYS
*Appeared in Scribners Magazine, 1898.
Oil on canvas, 23.4x 35.4in.*

IN THE MEADOWS OF YOUTH
*This painting appeared in The Century
Magazine, 1902. Oil on canvas, 31.5x17.5in.*

THE COMING OF LANCASTER
*Pyle said: "If a face against the light seems
dark, it sometimes can be lightened by
darkening the hair or hat." This painting
was printed in Harper's Monthly Magazine,
1908. Oil on canvas, 35.5x23.25in.*

THE FIGHT ON LEXINGTON COMMON

Pyle recommended establishing the tonal structure of the picture immediately in the painting process. "After the first half-hour of work," he said, "your lay-in should kill at 100 yards." 1898, oil on canvas, 23.25x35.25in.

PRINCIPLES OF COMPOSITION

Above all, Howard Pyle believed in storytelling and in the simplicity of images

To Pyle, art didn't exist for its own sake but rather for the sake of the story. The expression of an emotion or an idea was paramount and he thought it was essential to keep the picture simple in tone. "The fewer tones the simpler and better your pictures," he said.

Sometimes he unified shapes by connecting them with an enveloping shadow; sometimes the light areas spilled over into one another. By deliberately placing two shapes of similar value adjacent to each other, the shapes formed a larger unit. "Put your white against white, middle tones (groups) against greys, black against black, then black and white where you want your centre of interest," Pyle advised.

In the case of The Fight on Lexington Common (above), for example, the white crossbelt over the shoulder of the running minuteman blends into the white sleeve of the figure behind him, while his brown breeches and coat form a larger unit with the legs of the figures behind. To concentrate attention on the face of the running figure, Pyle sharply contrasted the black tricorn hat atop the figure's head with the white shirt behind it. The head becomes even more of a focal point because of the way the lines of two musket barrels radiate from that point of the picture.

This careful arrangement benefits the storytelling in two ways. First, it directs the viewer's attention to the narrative focus of the picture without the distraction of trivial details. And, second, it allows the picture to be read from quite a distance, even if reproduced at a small size.

The Lexington illustration demonstrates another design strategy. Pyle arranged the group of soldiers on the left into a dense cluster, with detail layered upon detail, while leaving large areas of the ground and the sky open. By grouping, clustering, and eliminating elements, Pyle pushed every picture toward extremes. "If you're painting a sky full of birds, or a garden of flowers, or any objects — show one or a thousand," he urged his students. "If an object in the foreground of your picture looks too big, make it bigger. If it looks too small, make it smaller."

Some of his thinking may have been unconventional, but there's no denying it paid off.
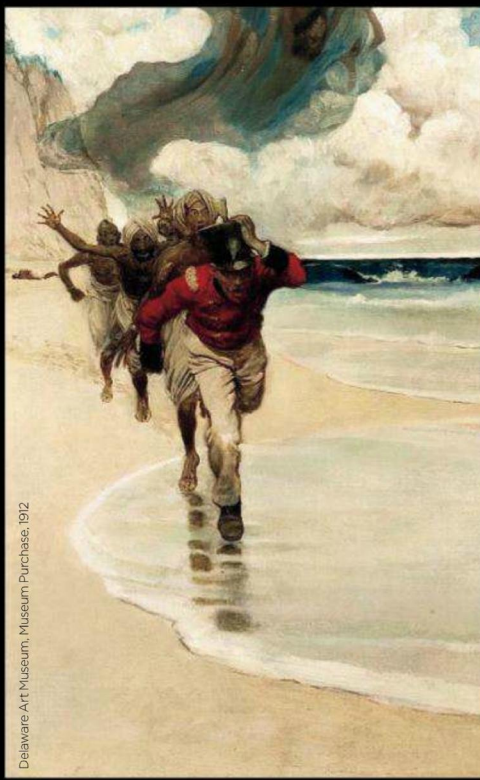
WE STARTED TO RUN BACK TO THE RAFT FOR OUR LIVES

Pyle could have spaced his figures out evenly, with each silhouette separate from the others. Because he clustered them together, however, the eye sees them as one shape first and then sorts them out. 1902, oil on canvas, 24.25x16.25in.

interpret as illustrators would call for nudes. Pyle once compared painting a nude model to painting a plucked bird.

The artist frequently took his own photographs, both for his own amusement and for reference. Most of the reference photos relate to locations, such as the canal scene, whose elements he recomposed to simplify the trees and the distant farm buildings for an illustration.

During Pyle's years of maximum productivity in the late 1880s, when he painted over 200 illustrations per year, he couldn't find the time to use models or costumes for every figure, so he relied instead on his imagination. Sometimes the lack of models is evident in poses or faces that are less than fully convincing. But being able to trust one's imagination and to work without references were skills important to him.

PYLE AND THE ACADEMIC TRADITION

Pyle received his early artistic education at a private art school run by Antwerp-trained Francis Van der Wielen, who taught him rigorous drawing, in the academic tradition, from plaster casts and from models in long poses. The students Pyle later taught at the Drexel Institute of Art, Science and Industry in Philadelphia, and at his own school in Wilmington, arrived with a similar grounding. Although he required that his incoming students possess a mastery of accurate observational drawing skills, he maintained that they had to unlearn some of that training to be successful. He drew a distinction between imitative and creative art, and he believed that concentrating solely on copying stifled the imagination.

Many of Pyle's compositions show strong parallels to the conceptions of earlier French painters, especially the military and
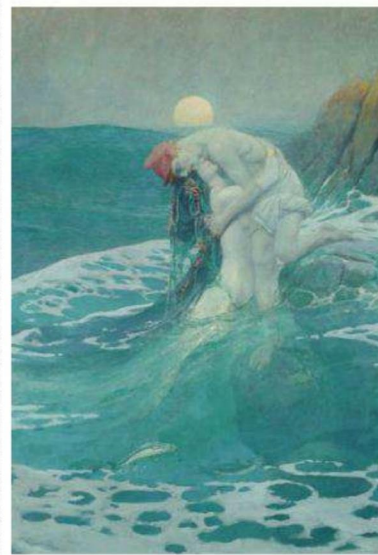
THE MERMAID

The fish were added by Frank Schoonover after Pyle's death. Gifted to Delaware Art Museum by the children of Howard Pyle. 1910, oil on canvas, 57.8x40.2in.

MAROONED
Two versions of the painting show Pyle's "necessity of elimination"

Pyle ruthlessly removed any element in a picture that was not essential to conveying the story. "They will never shoot you for what you leave out of a picture," he once said. His reductive instinct sometimes gnawed for years on a picture until it stripped the idea to the bone. The full-colour oil painting Marooned for example, was preceded by a black-and-white composition in oil, which Pyle had created to illustrate his own pirate story. As the visual idea matured in his mind, he took away the gun, made both the near waves and the far sea smaller, and reduced the size of the hat, the sash, and, most importantly, the figure itself. "He teaches the necessity of elimination," said a student. "That is, after a composition is once created the eliminations are more important than the additions." The power of subtraction echoed through Pyle's student NC Wyeth to Wyeth's son Andrew, who expressed the belief that an element removed from a picture still remains as a phantom presence.

EARLY VERSION OF MAROONED
Pyle chose to remove detail from the original image. Harper's New Monthly Magazine, 1887, oil on canvas, 18x25.7in.

MAROONED
Pyle advised his students: "If you get balled up on a part of the picture, go back to tone and don't rely on drawing." 1909, oil on canvas, 40x60in.

❝ He portrayed moments just before or after peak action, believing figures amid violent action to be less dramatic ❞

history specialists Édouard Détaille, Jean-Léon Gérôme and Ernest Meissonier. For example, Pyle evidently saw reproductions, if not the original, of Gérôme's famous painting Pollice Verso, which shows Roman gladiators locked in a battle to the death. Pyle's own painting of gladiatorial combat, Peractum Est!, bears a striking resemblance to the Gérôme canvas in its staging of foreground drama. In both paintings thin bars of sunlight slash across the sandy ground, with the distant crowd bathed in shadow or light.

MAINSTREAM CHANGES
Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advances in printing technology, literacy and mail delivery transformed the way images were presented, creating new opportunities for artists and altering the system of patronage and distribution. The popular demand for realistic narrative images continued unabated, despite the emergence of Impressionism and Modernism. Pyle recognised that the mainstream of art was flowing into a new channel. "The great art of the world is constructed upon a line almost identical with that of book and magazine illustration," he said.

Late in his career Pyle questioned the lasting value of book and magazine illustration. Some of his final pictures, such as The Mermaid and Marooned, were conceived as easel paintings. His voyage to Europe in the last year of his life was largely driven by a desire to develop his mural-painting skills. In the end the enduring artistic legacy of Pyle is rooted in his work for the printed page. "A wider impression can be made upon the world of American art through book illustration," Pyle said, "than through any other medium."

Pyle would surely have been pleased to know that 100 years after his death, his artwork continues to be appreciated by scholars, artists, writers, parents and children alike, and that his images reach a modern audience. ◉

Howard Pyle: American Master Rediscovered is published by the Delaware Art Museum. Their exhibit ends March 4 and moves to Norman Rockwell Museum, Massachusetts.

PERACTUM EST!
Pyle said: "There should be one great point of interest in a picture. One may have other points of interest, but they must be subordinate to the great idea." 1897, oil on canvas, 26x16.7in.

Development sheet

PROJECT TITLE: AUXILIRAE SHIP

Looking for a challenge, two friends, **Terry Maranda** and **Wesley Knee**, set about concepting and designing their Auxilirae Ship together...

Artist PROFILE

Terry Maranda
Canadian trad-digital artist Terry is "on a journey to draw monsters for a living", and is currently freelancing for companies in Montreal.
www.terrymaranda.com

Wesley Knee
Wesley is an art and animation graduate from New Hampshire, and his vehicle design won the 2011 ComicCon Challenge.
www.wesknee.com

Exploring the concept
Choosing a silhouette, we begin to sketch the basic side and top view to work out the details; the ship's functional pieces, the engine, weapons and how it transports its payload. Once we're happy with these elements, we work out the finer design elements in different angles to help with the 3D modelling.
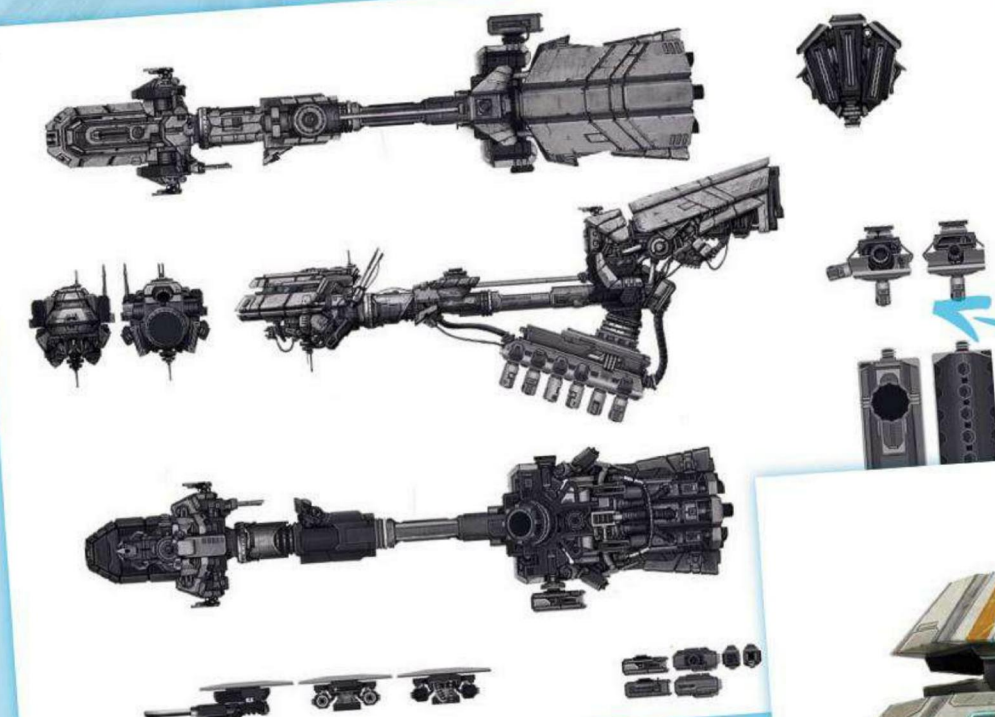
Baby steps
The Auxilirae project doesn't start off as a ship. We want to do one from the beginning but we both feel that we should test ourselves with a smaller project first. So after a quick orthographic concept sheet, we're getting started on the turret.

Testing the concept

Our concept is solid, its construction and animation are logical and, most importantly, it looks cool. We are both ambitious, so now we know we've established a solid pipeline before taking on anything substantial.

Considering real life

Construction is important to us. Certain elements of the ship need to feel heavy and supported by the pieces surrounding it. "How would someone actually build this and how would it function?" is a question we often ask ourselves.
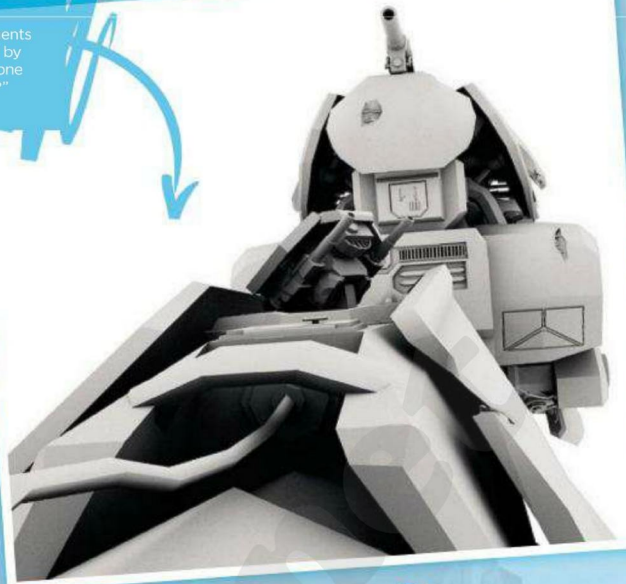
Ship thumbnails

We begin brainstorming ideas for an original ship style, something we can put the finished turret on, and so we begin sketching out ship silhouettes. Rough sketches like these are quickly done and can tell you a lot about the ship's scale and function.

Painting the model

The final illustration is done by matte painting over a 3D rendering. Painting in the textures and details of the ship is fairly easy, by adding a strong light source from the 3D scene. We're both satisfied with the project's final look and the methods we used to get there.

SEND US YOUR CONCEPTS!

Are you working on a project, or doodling your own development sketches that you'd like to share with us?

LET US KNOW! Email your WIPs and final images to: develop@imaginefx.com

FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

🇺🇸 Emily Fiegenschuh

LOCATION: US
WEB: www.e-figart.com
EMAIL: emily@e-figart.com
MEDIA: Gouache, pencil

Emily first considered an art career after she set up a card table in her hallway and sold her drawings to relatives for five or 10 cents a pop. "My favourite things to draw were animals, monsters and dinosaurs," she says, "and I've always enjoyed creating characters and costumes". Emily is still drawing and painting many of the same things now, as a freelance illustrator.

"I've illustrated numerous Dungeons & Dragons rule books and young adult novels for Wizards of the Coast and my how-to draw book, The Explorer's Guide to Drawing Fantasy Creatures, was published by IMPACT Books last year."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Emily has a fantastic imagination when it comes to creature design. I love the colour blends that have been implemented to capture definition and texture."
Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO DRAWING FANTASY CREATURES

27.75x17.75in, gouache on watercolour paper, Photoshop

"This is the wraparound cover image for my book, The Explorer's Guide to Drawing Fantasy Creatures. I created this large and complex illustration by painting the creatures in separate groups. I then scanned in and pieced all the characters together with Photoshop, and did a little digital painting on top to blend everything together."

2 THE FAERIE LOCKET

11.5x17in, gouache, watercolour paper

"This was a cover painting for the book The Faerie Locket. People familiar with the Practical Guide series published by Wizards of the Coast may recognise the character Pip from A Practical Guide to Faeries. For that project, I was lucky to have the opportunity to design Pip and define the general look of the faeries."

2
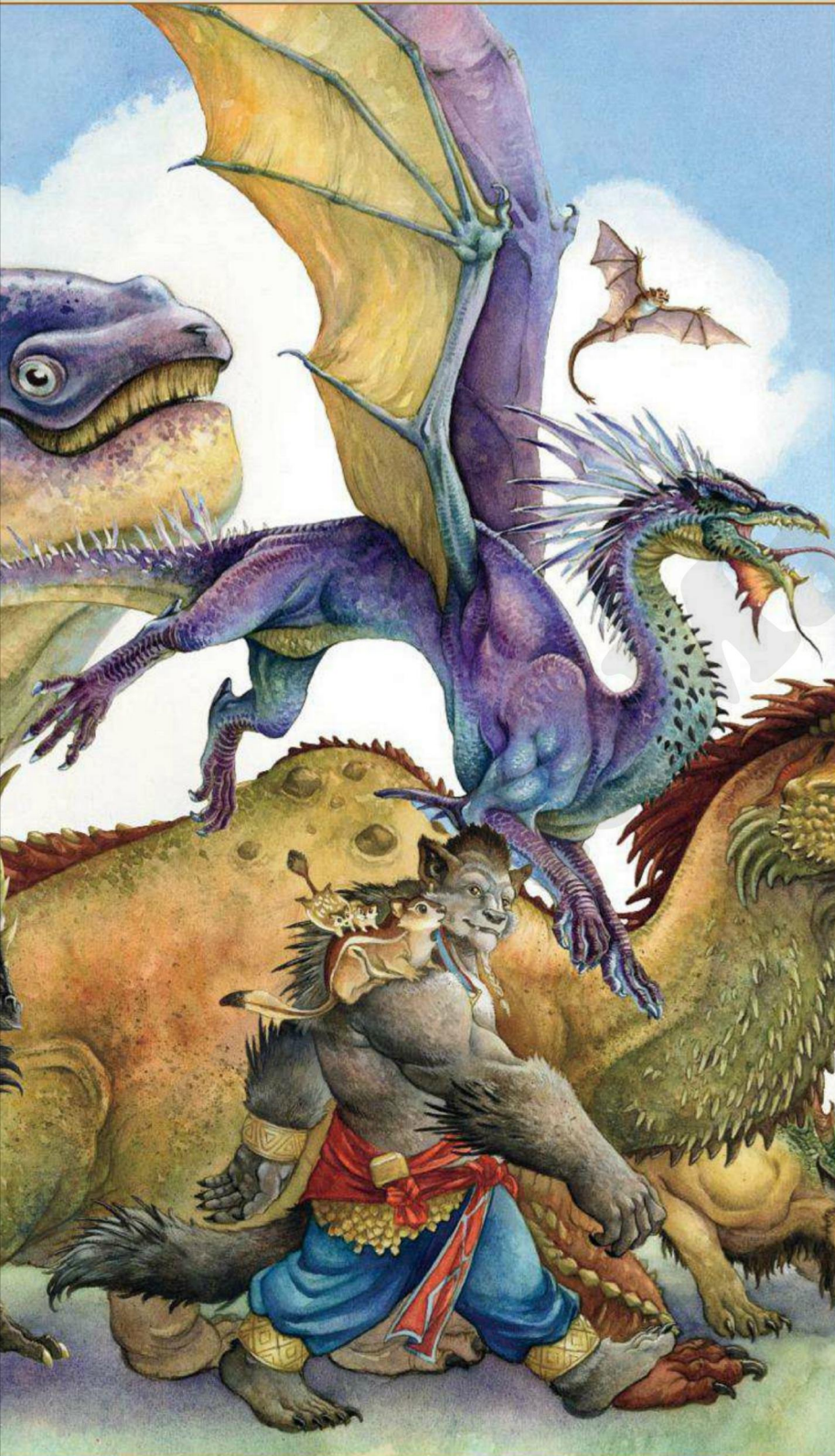
🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿 **Scot Howden**
LOCATION: England
WEB: www.scothowden.com
EMAIL: scot@scothowden.com
MEDIA: Watercolour

"I'm driven to be creative, love to paint and am intrigued by art, artists and the way they mould, sculpt or paint as a way to express ideas and emotions," says Scot. In fact, this artist is inspired by myths, fantasy and his own imagination as much as other artists. "Fantasy allows me to be more creative with design and settings and hopefully lets me produce art that expresses and elicits feeling."

1 PATCHWORK DREAM
21inx18in, watercolours
"I had fun with this painting and enjoyed designing the individual patchworked elements. I wanted the blanket to signify warmth and safety, but overall I hoped to achieve a dream-like nursery quality. The idea for the painting stemmed from a visit to the patchwork museum in York. I was stunned by some of the amazing designs which inspired the idea of a patchwork moon. I can't sew so I painted my patchwork in watercolour."

2 THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE
18.5inx18in, watercolours
"This painting was inspired by the fable of The Tortoise and the Hare. I don't know where they're bound or what adventures are in store for them, but I feel that there's a story here. I like the idea of the canny hare (and the way he is sharing his cleverness with the viewer while the tortoise just plods ahead) and hope that having him helps to give this picture a whimsical, light-hearted feel."

3 MOMENTS IN TIME
16x15in, watercolours
"This is influenced by HG Wells's The Time Machine and opportunities missed, plus I wanted to portray the fact that life is finite. The setting is inspired by the ocean – the swirly, fluid background and the shell as a time machine. The embryonic posture signifies rebirth."

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

27 PAGES OF TUITION

Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

70

78 **90** **96**

This issue:

Photoshop
PAINT A DYNAMIC PIRATE HEROINE

Aly Fell takes you through his methods and thought process as he paints a feisty pirate pin-up who's not in the least afraid of heights...

Artist PROFILE

Aly Fell
COUNTRY: England

Aly is a freelance illustrator who started out in traditional animation before moving to computer games. He has edited art collections and his work has appeared in both Spectrum and Ballistic publications. His favourite colour is black and he likes cats.
www.darkrising.co.uk

"**Y**o ho ho and a bottle of rum! Shiver me timbers Jim lad! Pieces of eight!" Why do pirates all seem to come from Cornwall, Devon or Somerset? Blame it all on Robert Newton, who played Long John Silver in the 1950 Disney version of Treasure Island. He was the first to employ the "Arrr!" we're now so familiar with, although he wasn't far from the truth. However, the pirate I'll be showing you here is certainly no Long John Silver. In fact, the only black spot here is her beauty spot!

The object of this tutorial is to paint a pirate pin-up in strong perspective. Perspective is something I don't play with a great deal in my everyday private art, so it's been fun and rewarding to experiment with a more dynamic pose with strong depth of field. Pushing yourself is what learning is all about.

I'll concentrate on my painting method and thought process and take you through it one step at a time. I don't really use a lot of tricks so to speak, except maybe playing with layer modes, or the Fade and History options, but more of that later. My finished look is inspired by pin-up artists such as Gil Elvgren and, using an older version of Photoshop, I'll emulate a painterly style using a limited brush range.

1 Rough beginnings

My first sketch needs sharper perspective, so although I like the pose, I initially imagined more of an overhead view, with a degree of fish-eye, as though the sea's curving away toward the horizon. This provides more interest, rather than the rest of the image being solely a background of sea. At this stage I keep my mark-making very sketchy and quick. I use a simple brush; a variation of the Conte with Shape Dynamics set to strong thick and thins.

Hard Round 10 Paint

Hard Round 10 Thick'n'thin

Pencil

Shortcuts
Liquify
Shift+Ctrl+X (PC)
Shift+Cmd+X (Mac)
Useful for tweaking subtle edges. It's a powerful tool, but don't overuse it!

2 Final rough

After producing a couple more sketch variants, I start tightening up the version that's approved by the ImagineFX team, using the same brush and pressing X to constantly switch between the black and white background and foreground colour. I create a new layer over the rough sketch, fill it with white and reduce the opacity. Then on a third layer I start my clean-up process. This is a digital version of a lightbox and emulates how I used to work as a traditional animator. At this point I will say that my layer set-up becomes pretty messy!

3 Brush considerations

Right now I'm still working at half resolution, 150dpi. It makes mark-making quicker on a slower PC, particularly if you end up using many layers. I'll increase the size later, of course. I use a limited range of brushes, mainly three or four, unless I'm after something very specific. I treat Photoshop like a painting medium rather than a photo manipulation tool. The brush I use here is Hard Round with a dual-brush texture set to Wet Edges. This provides slightly transparent mark-making, so you have to build up colour more naturally.
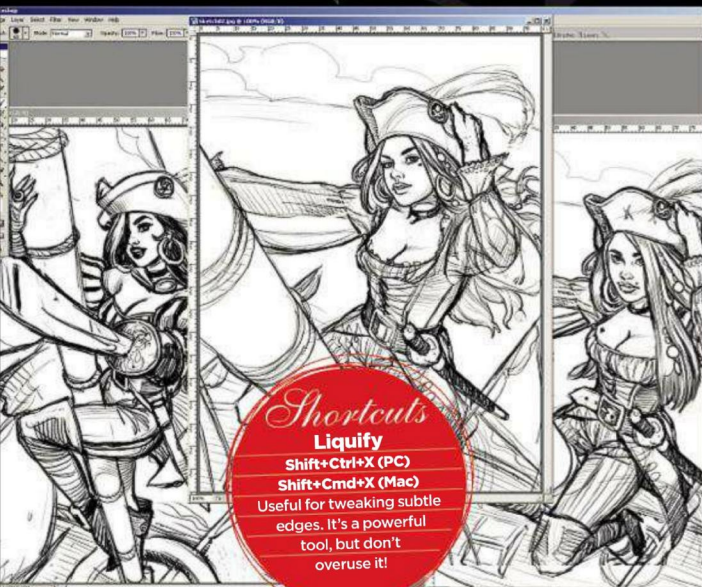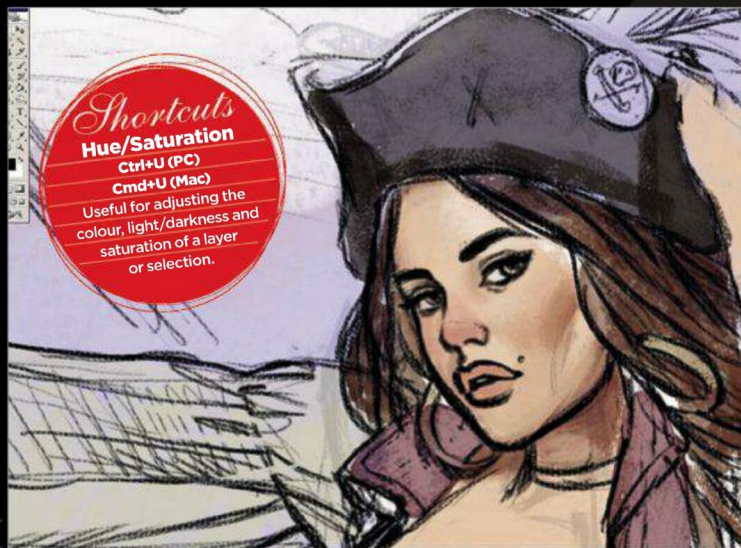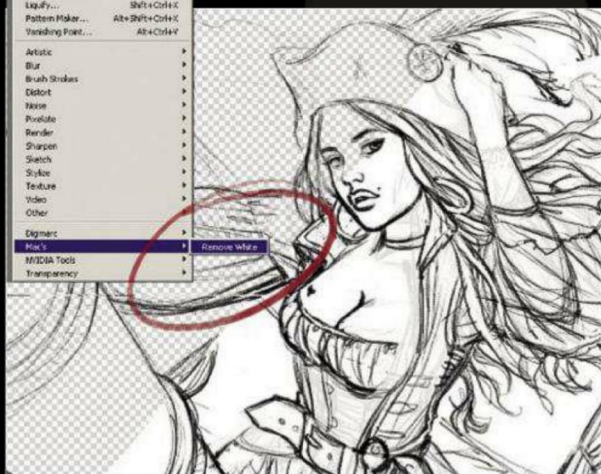
Shortcuts
Hue/Saturation
Ctrl+U (PC)
Cmd+U (Mac)
Useful for adjusting the colour, light/darkness and saturation of a layer or selection.

7 Spreading out

After I get a face that I'm relatively happy with, I spread out to the body, costume and accessories. I'm not tightening anything up yet – that comes later when I upsize the resolution. Here I start to get more erratic and my layer count can go up considerably, in a rather disorganised fashion. When you really get into what you're doing, there's nothing wrong with this. Sometimes it's good to have a strict procedure, but the way I work is pretty much like my office: messy. When unsure of something you're doing in Photoshop, stick it on another layer. You can build up as many as you want if your computer will take it. As long as you intermittently merge layers when you're happy, it doesn't matter.

4 Start applying colour

I flatten my sketch and create a Multiply layer over it. This enables you to see your line-work underneath. I work loosely, just trying to get body colour down, and the important thing at this stage is to avoid being precious. The huge advantage of working digitally is that everything is easy to undo, so I just enjoy splashing colour around. I'm after a fresher daytime feel, but I love muted palettes, so compromise with subdued blues and browns.

6 Start on the face

I nearly always start with the face. I know a lot of artists do the same. In character work the face is the most important focal point, so deserves more attention. After applying a basic flesh tone, which I build up with the same Wet Edges brush, I colour pick from the lighter and darker hues, sometimes setting the brush to Multiply to produce darker colours from which to colour-pick. Darker tones often result from where the colour overlays the sketch and the serendipitous nature provides interesting variations.

8 Use references

There's a lot of debate about how to use references, and of course the ideal way is to shoot your own. However, when time is an issue, look what's around you in your home that can substitute for what you need. Build up a library of references that you can refer to when needed. The only reference I used in this image is a pirate hat, a sword, some clouds and the folds on one of the sleeves. However, I did look at images online for inspiration, as no-one works in a vacuum. I mean, what does a ship's deck actually look like?

5 Adjust the layer order and build up colour

Eventually I send the Multiply layer to the background with the line-work over it, so that the initial colour layer is now on the bottom. I then remove all the white from the line drawing. There are a number of ways to do this, but if you search the internet there are many Photoshop plug-ins that make the process easier and quicker; the plug-in that I use is called Mac's Remove White, which is easily found. I then start the process of building up body colour over the rough colour and the line.

9 Upsize the image

As mentioned, I work at half resolution to speed up the process a bit, but when most of the basic colour has been laid down it's time to start rendering up those details. I go into Image Size and double the dpi, also adding 5mm all round for the bleed. Bleed is very important. In TV it's called cut-off, and is essentially the bit you don't see at the edge, but you might see it. It allows for error and adjustment. Bleed varies in size from job to job, but it is necessary.

10 Flipping the image

As I work I find it incredibly useful to constantly flip my image. I have a keyboard hotkey set up for this, so it becomes part of my workflow quite naturally. Flipping can enable you to see errors you may not have been aware of. We all naturally slant our mark-making, left to right or right to left. This can produce a lean in your image if you're used to seeing from one point of view. It's pretty much like seeing something with a fresh eye, so building it in as part of your process just cuts down on correction later.
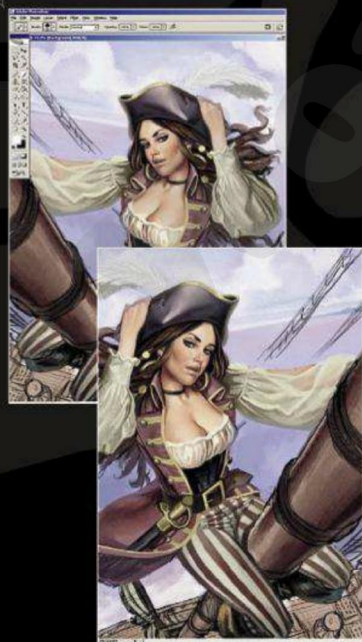
11 Detail considerations

From here on it's rendering up. I don't go mad with detail, as I said earlier, I'm after a more painterly look. But being able to imply something with a single mark is a masterwork in itself, and few artists can manage that, for example Greg Manchess. So although keeping detail down a bit, I need enough to say what I want with the image. I start rendering up the costume and the mast. I'm no expert on ships, so I'm putting that off till later!

12 Expression and personality

My pirate lass is a bit cheeky – pin-ups are. But the ones that work well pull you into the image without being gratuitous. When concentrating on the face, don't forget character. A raised eyebrow can speak volumes, and gives a knowing self-awareness to the character where a neutral expression can leave you cold. Remember, the person you're drawing has history and motivation. Ignore that, and the result is bland, so get inside their heads.

13 Paint the background

It's time to tackle the background. I want spray coming off the ship to indicate speed, so I use the same brush I've used all along, but with a lower opacity, and a standard Oil Pastel brush that's set to Wet Edges. I keep my marks loose and fast, erasing with a Soft Round to fade them off. I also use the Erase-to-History brush if I go wrong, and the Fade option to modify the amount of erase. Yet when I've painted a sea I'm happy with, it's not dark enough, so I hide the layer with my pirate on, click Select all>Copy all layers and paste into a new layer. I put this layer on Multiply and drop the opacity. The sea now looks deeper and more how I'd imagined it. I then erase bits I don't want to see.

14 Nearly there...

I flatten the background layers, making sure my pirate is on her own layer, and start tweaking. This involves tightening things up, adjusting Contrast, Saturation and using the Liquify tool to subtlety push elements of her face for expression. To alter the light/dark of the character, I duplicate the layer she's on and tweak the settings in Brightness/Contrast. I then erase back to see the original underneath. This enables you to emphasise shadow and more exposed areas. I also add a very slight rim-light on the top layer.

15 Final image

Finally it's time to flatten the image and suddenly the computer stops chugging. If you're making dark/light adjustments for example, don't use Multiply, use Brightness/Contrast instead. It amounts to the same thing and gives you a bit more control. On the flattened image you can do any last-minute tweaks, and voila, she's done! Phew… ●

PRO SECRETS

Flip your image
Constantly flip your image while working, so it becomes part of your workflow and enables you to see any errors with a fresh eye.

150 to 300 dpi

Photoshop

USE TEXTURE IN YOUR ART

Horia Dociu's layer blending techniques will give your digital art a traditional feel

Artist PROFILE

Horia Dociu
COUNTRY: US

A 13-year veteran of the games industry, including work on Half-Life 2 and directing the Cinematics Team on the Guild Wars series, Horia's currently the visual director at Sony's Sucker Punch Productions and a digital painting instructor at FuturePoly.
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In this workshop I'll take a loose concept illustration of a village carved into the side of a mountain and demonstrate you how to turn boring photo references into textures that will support your most fantastical ideas. You'll learn about some of the simple yet extremely effective techniques that I've picked up over the years which enable me to focus more on the big picture, rather than spending hours polishing something with a weak foundation.

By experimenting with photo texture overlays, you can produce fast, beautiful results with just a bit of thought and a whole lot less sweat. Spinning, scaling and warping photos as you stack them in layers atop each other while playing with various blending modes to achieve new

and interesting composite textures can yield the type of happy accidents that traditional artists have learned to harness and work into their process. Why should they have all the fun? I'll show you how to transform a sloppy tonal sketch into an environmental illustration with lots of mood, colour and atmosphere in just a matter of minutes.

I'm not including my raw photo source here for copyright reasons. I often use photos from the internet, but I always alter them and apply them in an abstract way. Try taking your own photos, and over time building a versatile reference library that's as unique as your set of custom brushes.

So come up with a fun idea, grab your digital camera, and let the photos do the hard work!

1 Rough it out

I have a rough idea of what I want to draw, so my first step is to scribble up a tonal sketch. I want the thumbnail looking nice, so I'm not terribly concerned with perspective or anything past the main idea at this point. Some people like to do multiple thumbnails, but I just paint over the first one until I like it.

2 Just a hint...

Now that I like the general layout, I want to start adding some colour. This can be daunting for me starting from black and white, so I use Photoshop's Color Balance tool (Image>Adjustments>Color Balance) to get the ball rolling and hint at some colour. You can control the shadows, mid-tones or highlights separately with the Tone Balance tab within the Color Balance menu. I push the highlights toward warm colours and the shadows toward cool.
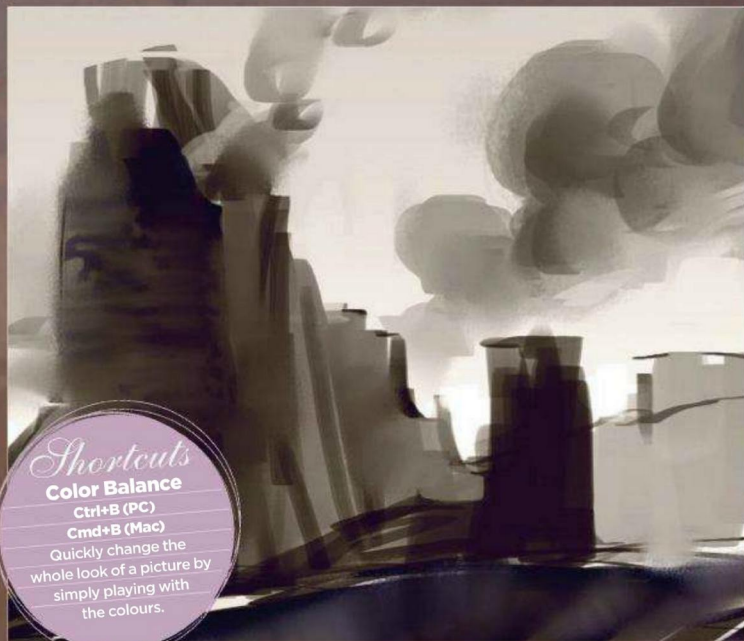
Shortcuts
Color Balance
Ctrl+B (PC)
Cmd+B (Mac)
Quickly change the whole look of a picture by simply playing with the colours.

3 To the reference folder!

The most important aspect that dictates colour is the sky. I overlay this photo of some interesting clouds in a layer set to Multiply above my sketch. I want it to feel like sunset, so on that layer I use Color Balance to mess with this photo's hues to match the desired mood. I don't want the clouds overlapping the mountain, so I erase that part of the layer away before I flatten the image.

4 Get stoned

Despite being in a rough state, I'm keen to introduce texture early on in the process, so that my eye has details to pull out and paint-over later. I start by overlaying a photo of red stone mountains from Utah in Multiply mode. Again, because I don't want stone texture on my clouds, I erase that part of the layer. I use the Clone Stamp to copy more stone texture the parts of the mountains that the photo didn't overlap neatly.

5 Happy accidents

Now I overlay a photograph of smoke around the tower structure in the Overlay blending mode, because that works best with this photo to produce the highlighting effect I'm after. I always cycle through and try all the different blending modes of a layer so I can let my eye decide which mode mixes best with the layers beneath. This is an organic working style, and it's one of the few ways to achieve happy accidents in digital painting.

6 Abstract overlays

I want the tall mountain to have hundreds of little homes carved into its side. Just because I can't find a photo of this non-existent structure doesn't mean I have to paint it from scratch. I use a photo of a village in Hard Light mode to get me started. For more interesting concept art, try pairing seemingly unfitting photos to produce desired textures. A city map can look like a spaceship circuit-board if it's overlaid cleverly, for example.
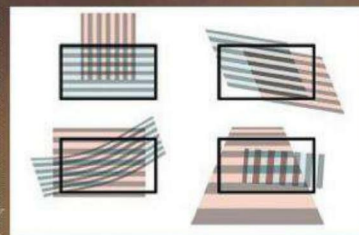
7 Further exploration

Just like playing with blending modes to discover different ways for textures and photos to mix, it's important to also experiment with the size and shapes of the photos. In this example, starting with the same two pink and blue stripe patterns, I'm able to generate many different textures where they overlap by warping and scaling the layers I overlay. This can generate beautiful textures when you start with interesting photos and use them abstractly in this way.

8 Scale, scale scale

Nothing can throw off a believable concept worse than poor scale. In this piece, I'm going to scale the house textures just like in Step 7 to alter the perceived scale of the mountain. I want the windows to be on a par with the architectural details on the tower. With a simple key stroke (Ctrl+T) I can change my building from having a thousand small windows to having only 100, making the scale more believable.
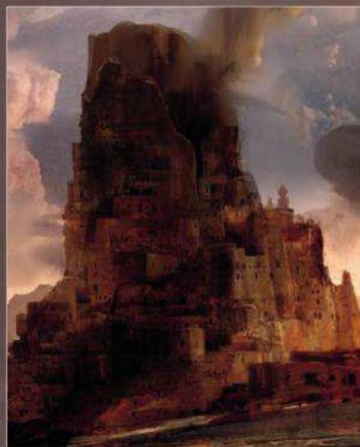
9 Guide the mess

So far I've let the photos do the work. But it's looking a bit sloppy and flat. So now I simply paint over the mess to introduce some structure. I use the Burn tool to darken the mountain so that it's shaded against the light source. I also grab colours that already exist in the painting with the Eye Dropper tool and painting edges of buildings. It'd be a waste to totally cover the photo textures, so I just nudge them in the right direction.

10 It's never too late to change your mind

Time to fix the perspective on the mountain; it seems to be falling away. I cut it out with the Lasso tool, paste it and warp it with Edit>Transform>Perspective. I then remove the cut edges with the Clone Stamp tool. I get rid of the dark cloud because it's grouping in with the tone of the hills and flattening the image. It's worth doing big fixes like this, even late in the game, because no rendering tricks can fix bad composition.

11 The sky's the limit

This new photo better supports the sunset theme. I crudely select the city foreground with the Polygonal Lasso tool and copy it into a new layer. This enables me to paste the new sky behind my city so I can manipulate it to make sense. I've kept the detailed clouds on the right side, and stretched the calm darker part of the photo left, so the sky doesn't look too busy against the mountain. I use Color Balance to make it feel cohesive.
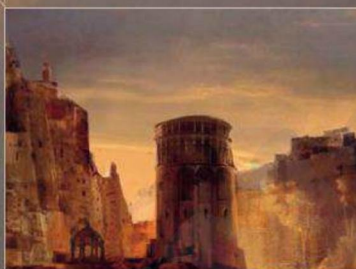
12 Add interesting detail

I quickly paint up the edges where the sky touches the city, and add more details like the wispy clouds on the right, as well as define structures. I work on a separate layer in case I make a mistake. On another layer, set to Multiply, I overlay some architectural details from a building photo over the tower to add interest. I want it to look ruined at the top so I just erase away the photo roughly up there.
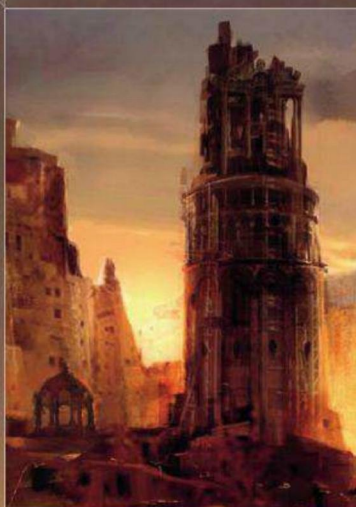
14 Don't forget the foreground

I'm adding some dark foreground elements on a new layer. I'll paint them black so that they pop forward. I'm using hand painted and darkened photo elements that have interesting silhouettes, and because they're on separate layers, I move them to just the right spot that'll help frame the image correctly. I hit the edges with an orange rim light so they fit in the scene. The hot air balloon helps tell a little story and brings some life into the scene.

13 Reinforce the lighting

My tones are describing the light source; now my colours should support that. It makes sense that the sunlight is warm, but shadows are only lit by the ambient blue sky light. So I copy the whole image into a new layer above everything. I then use Color Balance again and push the whole thing toward blues. Lastly, I erase away everywhere but where I want the blue shadows to be.

15 Finishing touches

On a new layer I add more texture to some of the rock surfaces, clean up edges and add highlights to the flat ground behind the fence to further the illusion of depth. There's no need to over-render anything. The rough look is appealing to me because it suggests more than dictating where every tiny window goes. The big picture is what's important! Time to email this to my mom so she can pin it on the fridge. Hi mama!

66 We want to be masters
of composition, bending it
to our will, so that we can
make the viewer's eye do
what we want it to do 99

Artist insight
MAKING GREAT COMPOSITIONS

Dan Dos Santos shows you his favourite tricks for coming up with strong compositions that are guaranteed to have immediate impact

Artist PROFILE

Dan Dos Santos
COUNTRY: US

Known for his colourful paintings, most often depicting strong women, Dan's work spans a variety of genres including novels, comics and film. He has worked for clients such as Disney, Universal Studios, Wizards of the Coast, Dark Horse Comics and DC Comics.
www.dandossantos.com

A strong composition is crucial to a successful piece of art. It's what will attract a viewer's eye from across the room, and what will hold their attention once they take a closer look. It can mean the difference between an action-packed piece of art and a more solemn, contemplative one. But how do we make a composition convey the mood we want, and what is it that makes a composition successful?

There are a many long-standing rules regarding what makes a good composition, such as the Golden Ratio, the Golden Spiral and the Rule of Thirds. But they aren't really rules at all. Think of them as suggestions… or better yet, as optional templates. Traditional methods like these are just one answer to a problem which has an infinite number of solutions. Ultimately, their purpose is just to offer a simple method for an artist to use to make a more pleasing image. In this workshop I'll discuss some of these traditional techniques, but more importantly I'll explain why they are successful and how you can use that knowledge to make a better image.

To begin, all you really need to know is this: a good composition is nothing more than a pleasing arrangement of shapes, colours and tones. That's simple enough really. Chances are, most of you can make a good composition with your eyes closed. But we don't want good compositions, we want great compositions! We want to be masters of composition, bending it to our will, so that we can make the viewer's eye do exactly what we want it to do. In order to do that, we first need to understand the basic properties of composition.

1 The basics

The root of all composition lies in relationships. Look at the first image (the two black squares). Although it's technically a composition, it's not a very successful one. The viewer doesn't know where to look, nor is there any sense of flow to the image. By altering one of these squares, even slightly, I've created a much more successful composition in the second image. As simple as the image is, it already has a sense of motion, and depth. How? Through relationships. By causing a disparity between the shapes, I've given the viewer a means by which they can compare those shapes. "This one is bigger, that one is lighter." The grey square appears to be moving and receding only when compared to the black square. The process of comparing these shapes requires that the viewer moves their eyes repeatedly around the canvas, and therein lies the true goal of a great composition: controlling that eye movement.
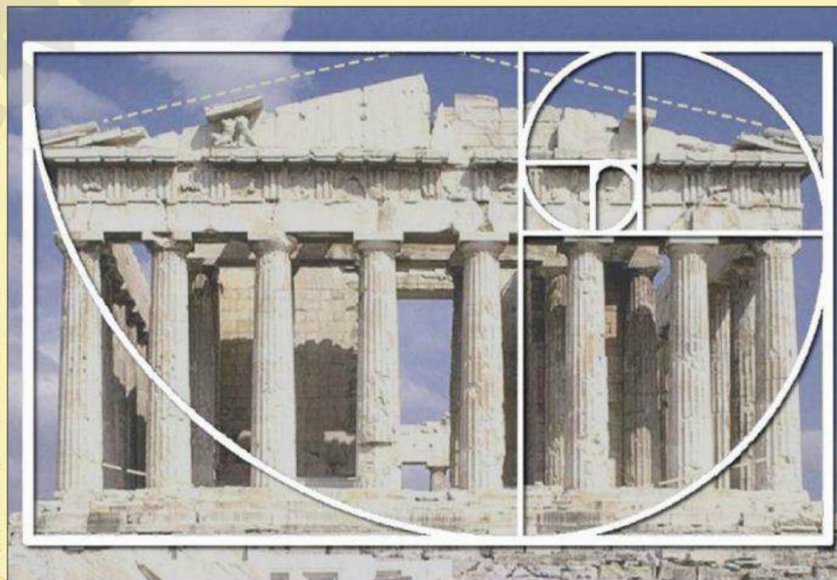
2 The Golden Ratio

Let's look at the Golden Ratio. The idea was started by the ancient Greeks, who were strong believers in the Platonic concept of ideals. They believed that all things, both tangible and intangible, have a perfect state of being that define them. They also felt that one should always strive toward achieving this ideal state, be it in mathematics, one's physique, politics or aesthetics. Greek mathematicians, after repeatedly seeing similar proportions in nature and geometry, developed a mathematical formula for what they considered an ideal rectangle: a rectangle whose sides are at a 1:1.62 ratio. They felt that all objects whose proportions exhibited this were more pleasing, whether a building, a face or a work of art. To this day, books and even credit cards still conform to this ideal.

THREE DEGREES OF SEPARATION

The Rule of Thirds also applies to colour. Try breaking your composition down into three distinct temperature ranges: warm, cool and neutral. Just like value, restricting certain areas to a temperature will create a more legible composition and a greater sense of depth. You can arrange these temperatures in any order. Use triptych schemes for colour temperature and value for maximum effect, ensuring focus and legibility in even the busiest of compositions.

A START OFF SIMPLY

When sketching a concept, think in terms of the simplest structure possible: background, middle-ground and foreground, then key each depth to a simple value range of either black, white or grey. If you can already tell what's going on in an image with this little detail, your composition is strong.

B REINFORCE YOUR IDEA

Once you've decided on the basic value structure, reinforce it with three distinct colour temperatures. In this case, I chose to make the background neutral, the middle-ground warm and the characters of the foreground cool.

C VALUES AND TONES

When painting the image, incorporate different values and tones into each of these areas, but be careful to squint at the piece often, making sure that the general impression of the area still falls within the chosen temperature/value range.
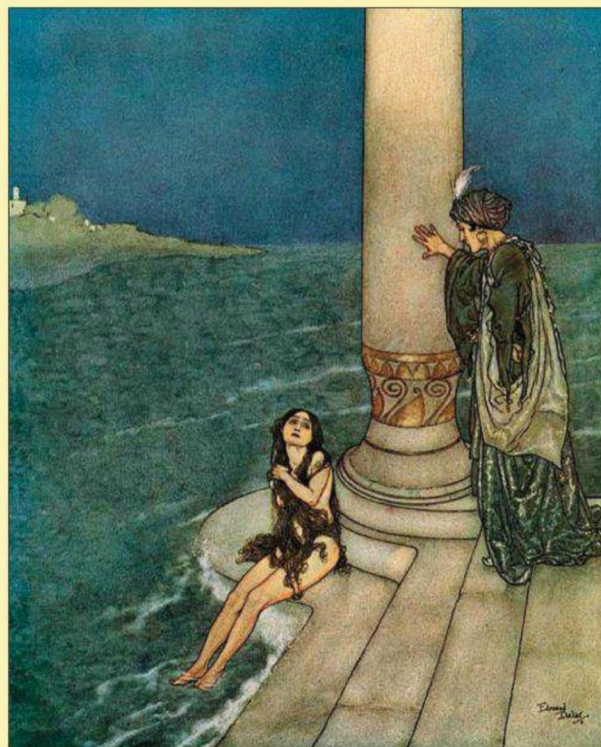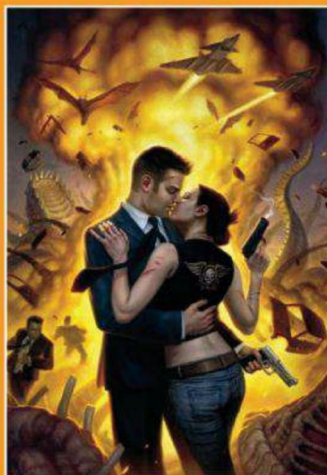
3 The Rule of Thirds

This states that if you divide any composition into thirds, vertically and horizontally, then place the key elements of your image either along these lines or at the junctions of them, you'll achieve a more pleasing arrangement. But does it work? Let's look at Edmund Dulac's painting, The Little Mermaid: The Prince Asked Who She Was. Dulac was great at using empty space to his advantage, partly because he tended to abide by the Rule of Thirds. Here Dulac has placed the column and the horizon line perfectly along a line of thirds. But what if he didn't? With the column and horizon line in the centre of the image, the result is less successful. The column dominates the image, stealing focus away from the figures. The viewer's eye is now glued to this strong shape that bisects the canvas, instead of wandering around the image like it originally did.
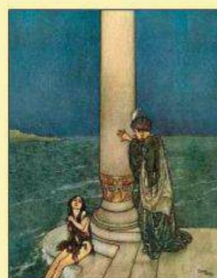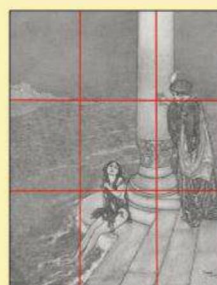
4 How the rules work

The Rule of Thirds works because it demands that the artist makes one element more dominant than another. This dominance creates an imbalance, and an imbalance of any sort will always attract the viewer's eye. Bisecting an image perfectly in half creates the least amount of interest, because everything is equally balanced. Look back at those black and grey squares. The first composition is boring because it's too balanced. Making one area of your composition more dominant creates tension, and therefore adds interest. It also makes your eyes move around the canvas more to compare all of these relationships.

The fact that the composition is divided into precise thirds is really of minimal significance. You could divide a composition in fourths, fifths or even tenths. So long as there's some sort of imbalance, the composition will exhibit tension. As you'll soon see, this concept of imbalance applies to many aspects of composition, including value and colour.
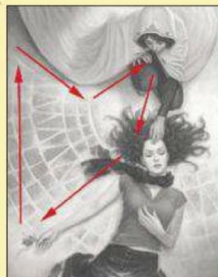
5 Implied lines

These are probably the most important aspect of a composition, because you notice them first. When painting realistically, there's no actual line around a subject. The illusion of a contour is a result of different values and colours contrasting. But even the impression of a line is strong, and our eyes will go to it and follow its length until it ends, or until it meets another line, which we'll follow again. A great composition makes strong use of this natural attraction to lines.

By creating strong lines for the eyes to follow, we can decide what path we want people to take and where we want that path to end. In this painting you can see a strong contour that follows along the cape, down the woman's arm, to our subject's face, down her arm, and then back up to the cape. This creates a nice circular current that keeps the viewer's eyes flowing around the composition repeatedly, holding their attention. That current also brings their eyes past every key element of the painting, one at a time.

And don't forget, whether you're working for print or for websites, the borders of your composition are an implied line, too.

> 💥 By creating strong lines for the eyes to follow, we can decide what path we want people to take 💥
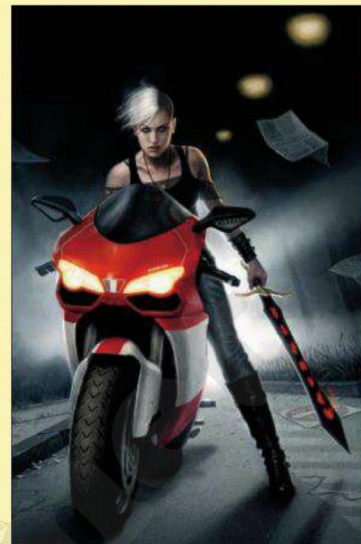
6 Reinforcing those focal points

As well as using implied lines to draw the eye all around a composition, you can use the same method to make someone look immediately at your chosen focal point. In fact, you can do it repeatedly, from multiple directions. This is particularly useful when your image is a portrait or a pin-up, and the character's face is the most important element. To bring more attention to a particular character, try to make surrounding objects, such as arms, swords and buildings, point to your subject. You can also use implied lines to frame the subject's face, locking the viewer's eyes in place. ➤➤
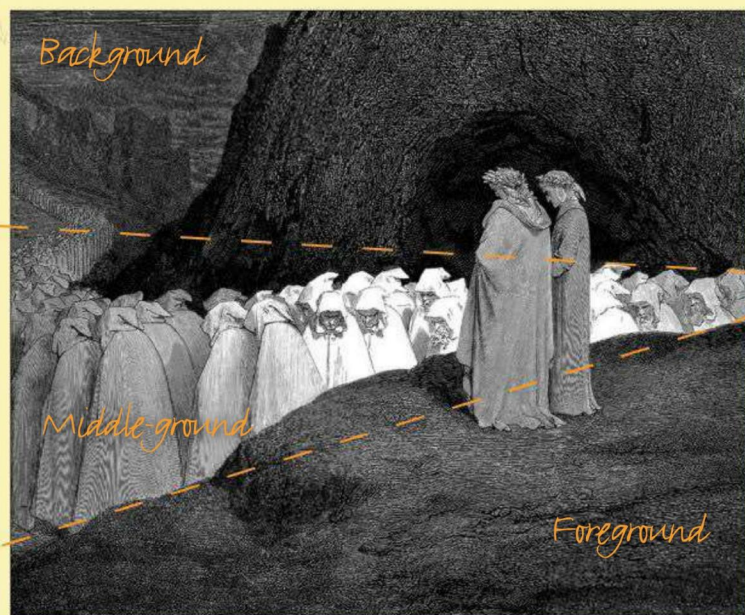
8 Imbalance of values

Looking at Doré's engravings, not only has he divided his composition into three obvious layers of depth by using three ranges of value, he also creates an imbalance in the proportions of those values. For instance, he may use a large amount of grey, and a small amount of white, but rarely equal amounts. This reinforces the importance of imbalance to create tension. By letting the composition be dominated by grey, the small accents of white and black garner more attention, and draw our eye toward the subject.

7 Threes are everywhere

The Rule of Thirds seems to work its way into most aspects of picture making, and value is no exception. When constructing compositions, I tend to think in general arrangements of foreground, middle-ground and background. To heighten the relationship between these three depths, I try to restrict each one to a general range of value, favouring black, white or grey (threes again!). For instance, you can let the background be predominately white tones, the middle-ground predominantly greys and the foreground predominantly black tones. Of course, any arrangement of these three values will work. By restricting your values in these areas you reinforce your image's sense of depth and make the silhouettes very easy to read – and that legibility is important. Muddy values hurt the viewer's ability to discern shapes, especially at a small scale. That's why you'll see this technique used so often in trading card art. When your image is just a few inches tall, high-contrast compositions work especially well.

Triptych value schemes like this are readily apparent in the works of the Old Masters, particularly in the engravings of Gustave Doré. His paintings all show different arrangements of black, white and grey to emphasise the difference between foreground, middle-ground and background.

> ❝ When constructing compositions, I tend to think in terms of foreground, middle-ground and background ❞


Background

Middle-ground

Foreground

9 The benefit of contrast

Black and white are inherently powerful tones. If you use them sparingly, and right next to each other, you can draw the viewer's attention to a particular spot with ease. When painting, try reserving the purest whites and blacks for your focal point. For instance, if your main character has very pale skin, try placing something extremely dark on them, such as black hair or black clothes. This is one of the easiest and most successful ways of making your subject pop. In my painting Blood Divided, I did just this to make sure the heroine sat apart from the background.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

Imbalance can create a more exciting flow to your composition, but it can also add drama. The next time your painting isn't exciting enough, try tipping the camera angle. Even the slightest tip to the horizon line can turn a mundane scene into a cool action shot. Experiment with the psychological impressions that different camera angles create.

Straight, this painting lacks real excitement. The bricks, rain and hair all create simple vertical lines, and don't do much to enhance the drama of the piece. Tipping the image gives it a whole new feel. Suddenly it appears like the woman is being thrust against the wall. There's also more of a sense of weight to their poses. The slanted eye level adds a sense of action, and helps your eye 'slide' through the image.
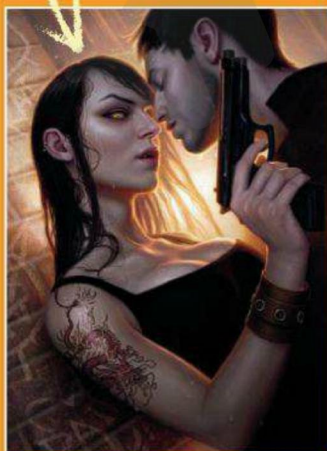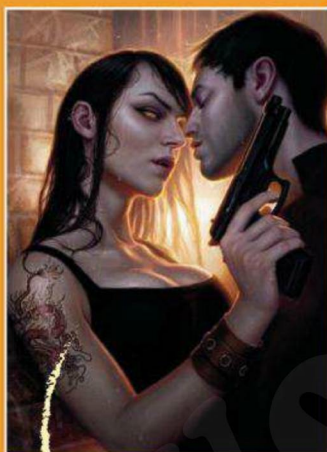
10 Making magic

Colour is an extremely powerful tool, and can inject a piece of art with mood and light. But it's also a strong compositional tool. Just like implied lines and contrasting values, colour can be used to draw the viewer's eye anywhere we want. As mentioned before, disparities draw the viewer's eye. So, if there's a colour scheme in place that's predominantly red then any other hue – particularly a complementary hue such as green – draws attention to itself. Or you can create a disparity between levels of saturation, such as a mainly grey painting with high saturation in a very small area. The greater the disparity, the greater the attention it receives.

I often use this method to create the illusion of magic or dramatic lighting. A colour can appear intense simply by making the rest of the composition relatively desaturated, and/or complementary, by comparison. The greyer everything else is, the more intense that colour will appear. My painting Soulborn is primarily red and purple, yet the reds and purples of the magic stand out because everything else has been slightly reduced in saturation.

> **Just like implied lines and contrasting values, colour can be used to draw the viewer's eye to anywhere we want**

11 Putting it all together

A good composition is one where the artist controls the movement of the viewer's eye to a beneficial result. We can do this by a number of means, such as reinforcing the focal point with the Rule of Thirds, implied lines, contrast of value and selective colour saturation. So, what happens when you put all of these tools into action in a single piece? This gorgeous painting by Jean-Léon Gérôme, entitled Duel After a Masquerade Ball, is the perfect example of using every compositional device to your advantage.

Okay, that's enough talking from me. Let's see what you can come up with…

Traditional skills

GET MORE FROM YOUR PENCILS

Pencils offer a variety of styles and here Terese Nielsen explains the basic tools and approaches to enable you to experiment in graphite

ImagineFX CORE SKILLS

Whether doing quick sketches and layouts, or highly realistic pencil renderings, graphite is wonderful in that it can produce a variety of looks.

When first becoming acquainted with pencils, purchase one of each grade from 9H-9B to become familiar with the hard/light and soft/dark qualities of each. Experiment with various surfaces, and a wide variety of strokes and mark-making. After gaining an understanding of the abilities and limitations of each pencil, investigate further with blending tools and erasers for creating different effects.

Attempting blending tools too early can look smudgy and amateurish. Keep your pencils sharp and if trying to render in a realistic way avoid outlining shapes. Focus on the juxtaposition of values.

Artist PROFILE

Terese Nielsen
COUNTRY: US

Terese graduated from Art Center College of Design, US, and has freelanced for 20 years, illustrating for comic books, Lucas Entertainment, book covers and gaming art.
www.tnielsen.com

SKETCHING TOOLS

If you're using pencil (or indeed charcoal and paste) to sketch with then you'll need some of these cheap and helpful tools close to hand...

Blending stumps
These are made from tightly wound paper, formed into a stick and sanded at both ends to create points. Used ideally to create gradations and half-tones, the sanded area is ideal for blending while the point (ideally kept clean) is best used to blend light-toned areas. Unlike fingers, blending stumps leave no oily smears.

Blending tortillons
Tortillons are made from rolled, loose-fibre paper and are pointed at one end. The softer paper texture of tortillons gives a different blending texture to stumps, and can be used to push colour and soften pencil edges.

Chamois
These small leather pieces are ideal for blending, but can be expensive from art shops. Instead, buy a large piece of chamois from a car care store, soak it in washing detergent overnight and then rinse in clean water in a washing machine to remove the oils. Many things can be used to blend, so long as they're dry and soft, and don't contain oils or chemicals. You could try cotton buds, paper towels and make-up applicators.

Kneaded eraser
Unlike standard office erasers, kneaded erasers are dry and don't smudge or leave flaked residue. More so, the softness of the kneaded eraser means they're ideal on sketching paper with a lot of 'tooth' – standard erasers will tear up the top layer of paper. These erasers can also be formed into points for picking out highlights in eyes and hair.

1 Which pencils should I use?
Pencils are graded on a scale from H (hardness) to B (blackness). Generally a 2-4H pencil is as hard as one needs for light areas, an H-B is for midrange, and a 5B-6B is for dark/very dark areas. Rather than switching pencils for each tone, experiment with altering the pressure and achieve different values. Furthermore, different brands vary, so experiment to see what suits your temperament.

2 Paper produces many textures
As much as pencil choice requires careful consideration, the paper you choose is just as significant. If attempting to create a highly realistic style, for example, use a smooth, hot press/plate finish surface. I prefer Arches 140 lb hot press watercolour paper or Bristol board plate finish. You can see just some of the varieties of textures that are possible with various paper surfaces.

Cameo surface etching with razor blade — Many types of Coquille board textures
Eggshell mat board — Bristol board plate finish — Linen texture paper
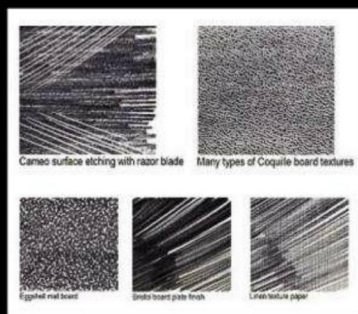
3 Lines and tools for blending
There are a multitude of strokes that can be employed to indicate textures of various objects. The lines utilised affect the mood and rhythm within a piece. If attempting a highly realistic style then use very small circular strokes with your pencil, otherwise unwanted banding of pencil marks occurs. Try shading with a variety of tools from blending stumps to paper tissue for better finishes.

Lightens areas — pressure — Small circular strokes — Chamois blends and lightens areas
Flat pencil with varied pressure — Facial tissue — Blending stump — Rubbing with notepaper — Blending tortillons — Getting out graphite with kneaded eraser

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX

Photoshop
LEARN THE SECRET TO PAINTING SKIN

Do your fantasy characters suffer from bad skin? Then it's a good job **Anne Pogoda's** on hand to remedy this unfortunate situation...

Artist PROFILE

Anne Pogoda
COUNTRY: Germany

Anne works for the German television and gaming industry and is also a lecturer at an art academy. After over 30 published workshops, she has produced two books (as author and contributing editor) with Ballistic Publishing.
www.darktownart.de

With this workshop I'm going to show you my working technique for painting soft skin. All we need are two standard brushes, one texture brush and one filter from Photoshop – we'll be airbrushing most of the time.

My experience in television has taught me that the good thing about starting in black and white is that you don't become distracted by vibrant or badly placed colours. I also learned that the colours you apply later look much more natural when you add them halfway through your painting and continue working with them. This way you can avoid the metallic shine present in many black and white paintings that are coloured in at a late stage. I usually start with a simple sketch on a dark background. Because the eye focuses on bright areas first, this method makes the canvas work for me.

What's important about skin is not so much the texture itself, but the use of colours. Skin can have many different and interesting colours, depending on the surrounding light. I like working with cold and warm contrasts. So, for example, I love to mix yellows and blues together because this makes the skin look more interesting. But usually, before I start mixing the colours, I try out basic colour schemes to gain a better idea of what the figure may look like. This also helps me to see if the colour scheme I've thought of is, in fact, the best fit for the figure.

1 Basic sketch

I start off with two layers. One is my dark background layer, while on the second layer I make a rough sketch using one of the standard brushes. Brush number five and number six from Photoshop CS5 brushes are the hard and soft brushes I prefer (in CS4 and earlier they're called airbrushes). Here I usually work with the second group of airbrushes, using the 19 Rough and 300 Soft.

2 First shapes

I begin by blocking in rough shapes with a soft airbrush at around 30 per cent opacity. My dark canvas helps me to see the forms quicker as I work from bright to dark. You can best see this working process on the face: I give it more definition at this stage, using a hard-edged airbrush to make the nose, eyes and lips more obvious with regards to their shape and position.

3 Define the structure

I define the structure of the shoulder with a large, soft-edged airbrush at around 30 per cent opacity. I outline the mouth, eyes and nose much more now, using a small airbrush at around 80 per cent opacity here. Then I make a rough sketch of the ear to see if I like its shape and position. It doesn't matter at this stage that the only brush being used is the soft airbrush.
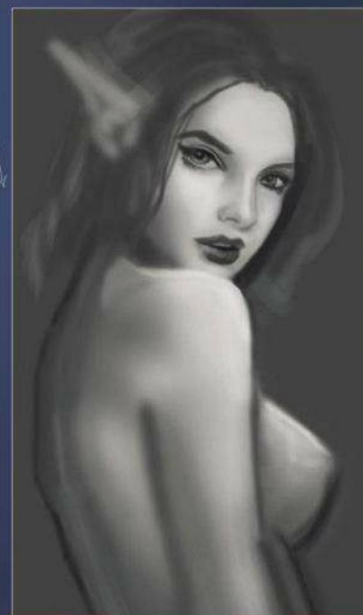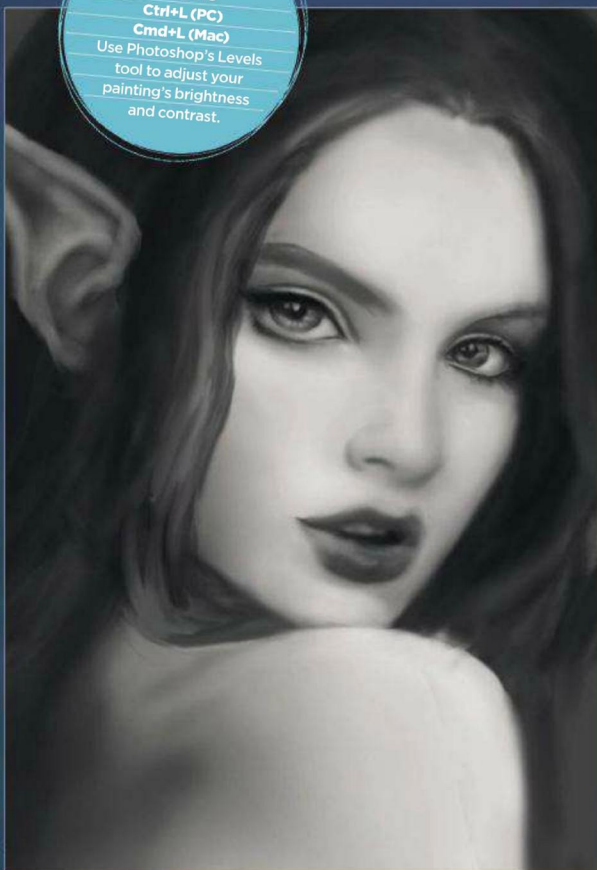
4 Adjusting the pose

I make the first adjustments to my character's pose by bending her back more. I also become a little clearer about her hair, but don't commit to its length because I'm not sure at this point how much of her bare back should be on display. I also start to correct her face here and there by making the nose smaller and adjusting the position of the eyes.

6 Make allowances for the light

The light is coming in from the right and so her back, especially around the shoulder blades, needs to be much darker. I achieve this using a dark grey with a big soft brush, again set to around 30 per cent opacity. Using the same airbrush I define her breast a little more. I then paint in the ear and frame her face better by defining the hair around it a little more.

8 A cold colour palette...

This is where it becomes interesting. I'm going to experiment with colours, so I make a new layer and set it to Color. I start with a blue background around the figure; because the background light usually influences the figure, I let some of the blue cover her body, too. Her skin seems to be very cold and almost undead now.

5 Correcting the arm

I now focus on making one more correction to her body. I fix her arm and add more contrast by painting in some dark grey. I usually never work with pure white or pure black, because I think that it makes any painting look too artificial. I then go back to her head and define the shape of her ear. I also make her lips and nose much softer looking by adding some dark grey to them with the soft airbrush.

PRO SECRETS

Draw from life
Not really a secret, but many people seem to forget it: practise by drawing from life models. Whether you're a professional artist or a beginner, studying a real human being rather than a photo will make a world of difference. You will notice so many more things about the body when the model is sitting in front of you.
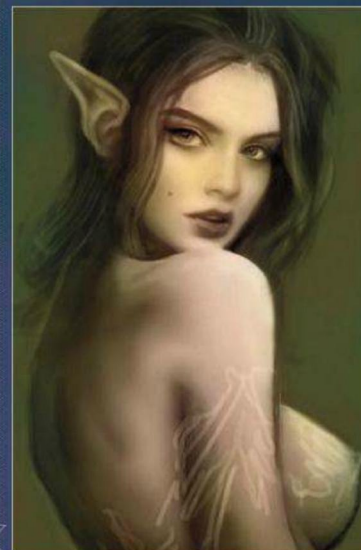
7 What to wear

I'm still unsure how to dress her, so I sketch rough clothing on a new layer and leave it for now. I draw some strands of hair on my dark base; I usually put hair on a new layer so I can push back parts with the Eraser. I continue to define her eyes. I make some minor changes to the face that add a lot to the shape. The lips and nose are softened, the eyebrows are darkened and the skin around her cheekbones is much clearer now. It's brightened around her mouth and on top of the cheek, and darkened at its lower end. The face appears to be much rounder this way.

9 ...and a warm colour palette

In contrast to the cold colour approach is this warm colour test, which could be used as part of a conventional faerie theme set in a forest, for example. The green of the background and the soft red of her body are significantly enriched with yellow, which makes the whole theme very warm. Her skin also looks much more appealing now – I've given that cold, zombie look the heave-ho!

10 Mixing colours

To create an interesting colour palette I decide to mix the two. This isn't much of a problem because each palette is on its own layer. I decide to erase parts of the background and her lower body from the warm colour palette. I set the Eraser to a soft airbrush and use it at an Opacity of 40 per cent.

11 Refining the colours

For this step I have to merge the figure that I've already painted into one layer, together with the background, and then save the different versions of the painting as PSDs. The adjustments I make here are done on a duplicate of my merged layer, using the Color Balance and the Levels functions. From step 10 the figure still has a lot more of the warm tones (yellow and red) in her face, which I keep to create a definite focal point. The overall image now contains more magenta and stronger contrasts.

12 The hair

It's time to find a solution for her hair. I make a new layer and roughly paint in a floating structure with a big, soft, airbrush, using dark blue. I want the hair to look almost weightless because the dark background could also suggest an underwater scene: a water faerie is something we don't see often. You can download or create a spackled brush to achieve a hand-painted look on your skin. It's highlighted in white in my screenshot. This brush comes from Linda Bergkvist's brush pack. It's ideal for when you've finished your basic airbrushing and want to give the painting a less clean, traditional look. You can apply it loosely over all your figure. It's excellent for painting hair, too.

13 Flip the image

Flipping your work – about once every hour, say – enables you to see your art in a new light, as well as spot errors. In this instance it becomes clearer where the final figure should go. A good trick to neatly merge a figure into the background is to apply colour on top on a new layer, using a large, soft airbrush with around 30 per cent opacity. Painting with low opacity enables you to mix colour directly on your canvas. I also adjust her lips so they're as red as her eye makeup, again to catch the viewer's eye. To use the Noise filter to create some soft skin texture, I make a selection of the skin and Copy and Paste it on a new layer. I access the Noise filter and choose how intense I want it to be. The filter might darken the painting a little, but you can readjust the skin with Levels and erase parts you don't like.

14 Add some interest

I now try to brainstorm on what could look interesting for her skin. A tattoo or interesting makeup would be suitable, so I paint some random shapes over her face using a new layer, and push parts back with the Eraser to ensure the pattern matches the shape of her head. The Eraser can be a big help when painting elements onto a figure, like hair and things in general that are supposed to rest on the skin's surface. The Eraser method works well as long as all parts of the tattoo, which cover darker areas like the side of the cheek, are pushed back. The areas that cover brighter areas like the top of the cheek are only slightly adjusted. This creates the illusion of the tattoo forming itself along the skin.

15 Add some final cover-ups

I cover her body with some sort of underwater fantasy leaves and create another layer on the very top of the figure, to which I would only add dark violet to fit the leaves better onto her body. This way of painting is a big time-saver and certainly helps to add a soft, tender feeling to the overall figure.

Photoshop
ADD COLOUR TO A SPACE BATTLE

Ryan Dening conceptualises and paints a space conflict, while making the most of Photoshop's layering ability

Artist PROFILE
Ryan Dening
COUNTRY: Canada

Ryan studied illustration at Sheridan College. His first job out of school was working on Legoland Germany for themed-attraction design firm Forrec in Toronto, Canada. He's currently a senior concept artist on Star Wars: The Old Republic.
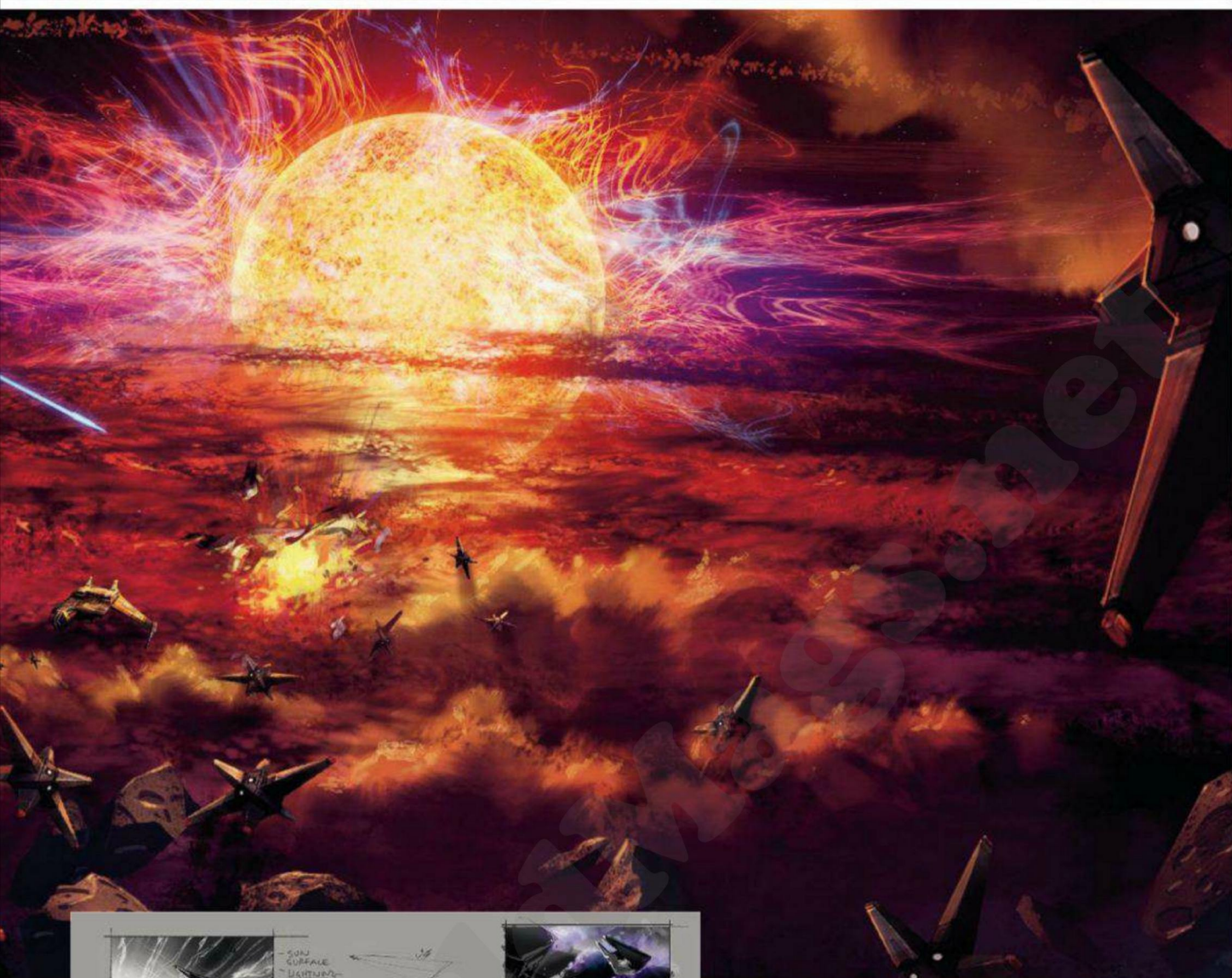www.deningart.com

Space in the Star Wars films is typically black with stars. The are no nebulas, but there are battles in the upper atmosphere, in asteroid fields and in orbit around large planets. For Star Wars: The Old Republic we wanted to push further so the player's visual experience varied significantly between space missions.

We explored a bunch of ideas and the one I'm focusing on here is set in a gas cloud being vented from a dying star. Ships are laying mines in the cloud and your mission is to clear the area and take out the enemy vessels.

I'll be relying heavily on Photoshop's strength in layering. I'll start with quick thumbnail sketches. From there I'll work on the final image maintaining most of my layers for flexibility. I'll also take elements from other art pieces that we produced for the game. This can be useful when time is tight, but getting it to feel integrated can be a challenge. I'll finish by using adjustment layers to vignette the image and produce the levels I want. All right, let's get started.
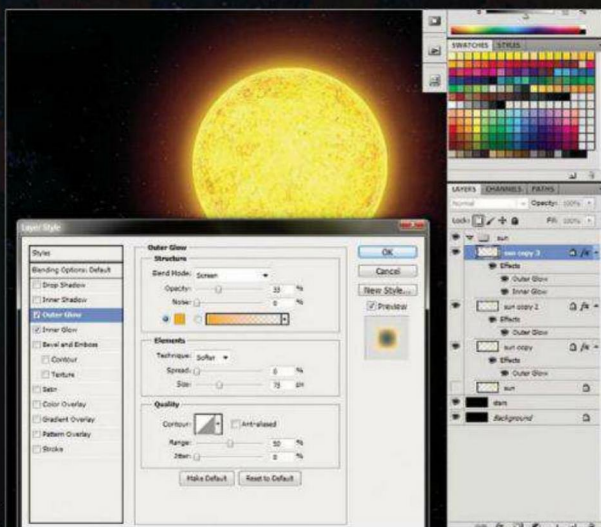
2 Sun surface

I start with a star field, onto which I'm going to put the sun down as an anchor. For the surface I start by creating a different file, roughly the size I want the sun to be, with equal height and width (square). On my second monitor I've collected some imagery of Earth's sun for reference. I begin by laying down colour, using textured brushes, over the whole image area to approximate what I'm seeing. When I'm happy with the surface, I open Filter>Distort>Spherize and crank it all the way up to 100 per cent. This gives the texture the impression it's wrapped around a sphere. I turn on Rulers and click/drag some guides off the top and bottom to find the centre of the image (I have Snap turned on, which enables me to do this easily). I use the elliptical marquee and drag from the centre while holding down Alt+Shift. I cut and paste this over the star field. ➤➤

PRO SECRETS

Layer selections

To make selections based on the contents of a layer from the palette, hold Ctrl and click the thumbnail. To modify selections hold Shift+Ctrl to add, Ctrl+Alt to subtract and Shift+Ctrl+Alt to intersect. If you're working within an existing layer's pixels, making a selection and doing this will change opacity and give you crunchy edges, so lock the layer's transparent pixels with the square grid button near the top of the layers palette. To do this in layers, make a new layer above, then right-click and select Create Clipping Mask.

1 Exploring ideas

I usually begin with thumbnails to get the creative juices flowing. Even if I have a clear picture in my head, exploring it further often brings out better ideas. Here I'm trying out a few different settings and compositions. I like to sketch these small, quick and simple to keep me from over-thinking them. Sometimes if I'm having trouble getting ideas to flow, I'll swap out the media and use paper or Post-it notes.

3 Layer effects

To achieve a glow outside and inside the sun I use layer effects. In the bottom of the layers palette I click and hold the 'fx' icon and select Outer Glow. This brings up a dialog that enables me to set the size, strength and colour. I duplicate the sun layer a few times so I can control the glow colour better, using a larger, warmer red for the bottom layer and a smaller yellow glow on the top layer, giving me a rich colour gradient. I apply an inner glow, with Linear Dodge set as the blending mode, to the top layer, to add heat bleeding inwards.

4 Asteroid belt

I'm using a rock brush I've made to paint the asteroid ring. The brush can give me different-looking shapes with only a few strokes. These settings include Scale, Roundness, Scattering and Foreground/Background Jitter. After laying in the base ring, I lock the layer using Lock Transparent Pixels and paint over the small rocks on the far side of the sun using a soft brush, so they appear lit. Because the pixels are locked, I don't worry about losing the silhouette and it doesn't change the transparency of the edges. With a Textured Round brush I rough in some highlights on the edges of the foreground rocks to make them feel backlit. The changing scale from back to front mixed with the implied lighting give the sense the rocks are orbiting the sun.

5 Painting the clouds

I use a rough texture brush to enhance the feeling of depth in the mid-ground with clouds. I scale down the brush as I get closer to the sun. I duplicate this layer and put a copy behind the sun. To help give the sense of a vast space I squish and stretch the copy. Because the angle changes due to the compression I rotate the cloud plane to match the foreground. I duplicate and scale these a couple more times. I lock all of the cloud layers and paint in the colours with a soft airbrush. I use the Smudge tool to soften the texture and imply movement. The clouds in front of the sun still look a little flat – what they need are shadows. So I duplicate the cloud layer, select its contents, contract the selection by a couple of pixels, invert the selection and hit Delete. I lock and paint this top layer with a dark colour, move and squish it a little until it looks right.
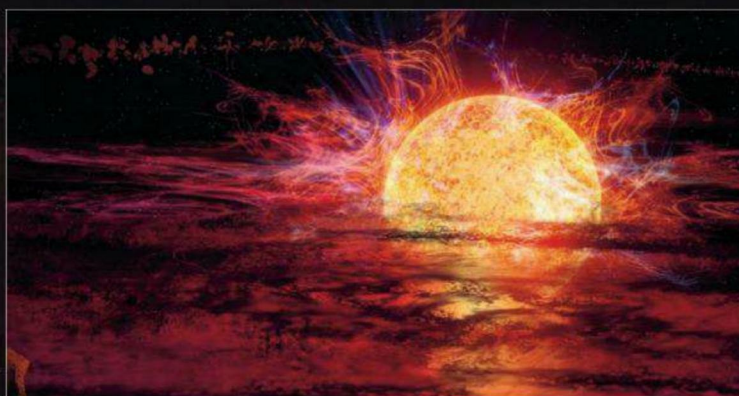
6 Sun rays

While painting in the clouds, I found the sun looked too much like our healthy sun to be venting all this gas. I merged my group of sun layers with effects and used Hue/Saturation to shift it towards red. I also scaled it up a little to sit better in the composition. For the rays I lay in some rough lines and use the Filter>Liquify tool to distort and move them around. This quickly gives the lines a fluid feel. I set the layer blending mode to Linear Dodge and duplicate/transform it a few times to fill the sun out. At this point the overall image is looking really orange/red, so I duplicate one of the layers and hue it blue to get the heat colours you might see in a welding torch. I add a blue burst that I made by putting some coloured dots in a separate file and use Filter>Blur>Radial Blur set to Zoom and cranked up.

7 Foreground

To give the feel that you're flying in the clouds I paint some colour in the rough shapes using a Chalk brush, making sure they're backlit like the asteroids. I use the Smudge tool to distort the edges, then duplicate and transform this layer around the image until it feels like the viewer is in the middle of them. I select the layer contents of the asteroids and erase some of the clouds so the rocks sit among them. I've also added some highlights and shadows to the asteroids to imply that they're pitted with craters.

Shortcuts
Copy merge
Shift+Ctrl+C (Mac)
Shift+Cmd+C (PC)
Copy a selection from multiple layers without having to find/merge them.

11 Adding a vignette

To further focus the viewer, I'm going to brighten the centre of the image and darken the edges. I click and hold the Adjustment Layer icon and select Levels... I bring the light values in from the right side. I want to vignette the image so I select the Level layer's mask and fill it with black. I pick the Gradient tool, set it to Radial and select the second preset that uses your foreground colour and fades it off to 0 per cent opacity. I pick white and drag the gradient out from the centre of the sun to the far left of the image, and repeat this until I produce the brightness I want. The sun has some blown-out spots so I paint those back in the mask with black and a soft brush. I create a new Normal layer and use the Gradient tool again – this time with Linear selected – and drag a little black in from the edges to enhance the effect.

8 Ship sketch

I start with a real loose sketch to get the rough design in place. I then add perspective lines and block in major zones to harden out the shape. Some linework is added to frame the design. Next I paint in the main highlights and shadows to give the design some form. For the details I use a Screen layer and airbrush in a brighter metal, erasing out some of the panels to add some surface variation. I increase the contrast if needed to make the image more dynamic.

12 Sharpening

Photoshop tends to make paintings soft, even when using a hard brush. To sharpen the image I Select All (Ctrl+A), Copy Merged (Ctrl+Shift+C) and Paste. This creates a new layer with all the layers flattened together. I select Filter>Other>High Pass and set it to around 1.2 (if the image is lower res, try selecting a lower number). This creates an odd-looking, grey layer, I change the blending mode to Overlay, the grey disappears and everything crisps up. I adjust the opacity of the layer to fine-tune the effect. If it's not sharp enough I might delete the layer and try again with a higher setting, like 1.8.

10 Laser time

I choose blue lasers for the main ship, to draw the eye in, and add an explosion for good measure. It needs a bright edge on everything that the sun would make. I create a new layer and paint in highlights – a huge step that can dramatically increase the quality of the image. I create Linear and Color Dodge layers to brighten areas and add glow haze. For shadows coming from the mines, I create a Multiply layer and use the Polygonal Lasso tool to draw selections from the centre of the sun out past the edges of the mines.
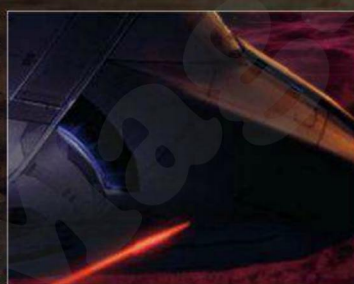
9 Merging in outside art

To save some time I'm going to take from the game's concepts for mines and ships. This doesn't always work, but since we're in space, I can get away with a lot of potential perspective issues. But you can see they don't sit well: they look flat and the lighting doesn't match the environment. To blend these in I create an Overlay layer directly above and lock it to the pixels of the concept layer. To do this I right-click the layer name and select Create Clipping Mask. I paint in shadows using a mid-dark grey-purple and use a light, warm colour for highlights. I create two clipping mask layers on top: one Normal to lighten the values and a Color Dodge layer to pop the surfaces hit by the sun. I select the source layer again and erase some of it out to imply they're sitting in the clouds.

13 Curves

I want to brighten the image overall because I noticed on my co-workers monitor that it showed up too dark. A powerful way to lighten or darken your image without destroying your lights and darks is to use the Curves tool. Create a Curves Adjustment layer and grab the middle of the line going from the bottom left to the upper right. Pull the point up a little and you should see the mid-range become brighter. Once again I mask out some of the areas around the sun since they go too bright. And that's the image done – hope you like it.
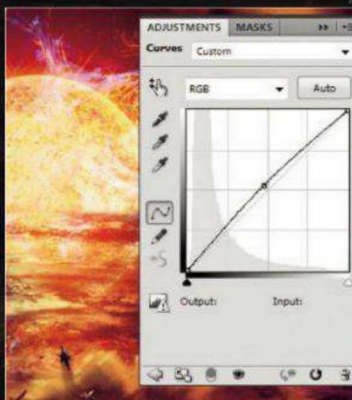
PRO SECRETS

Managing layers

Here are a couple of tips for working with layers. Hit V to get the Move tool. In the Options bar select Layer and then uncheck Auto-Select. With the Move tool selected, hold Ctrl and click the image: the top layer in that location will be selected. (Check your palette to make sure it's the one you want.) Also, group layers into key components to keep them organised. Select the layers you want, then hit Ctrl+G. If I'm working fast, naming the groups is usually enough.

Daarken paints our next cover!
See more of his fantastic art at
www.daarken.com

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The light touch
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Mixed media & Photoshop
DESIGN A POSTER FEATURING TYPE

Francis Vallejo explains the process he takes to create an eye-catching poster with a focus on traditional media and designing for type

Artist PROFILE

Francis Vallejo
COUNTRY: US

Francis works on a diverse range of personal and commercial projects (Playboy, Vibe, Soleil), with a focus on producing well-crafted, contemporary pictures. Along with freelance work, he spends the remainder of his time as a teacher and studio lead for TAD.
www.francisvallejo.com

Early on in my career, I was convinced that painting was the only route to a finished illustration. While I love painting, I love drawing even more. This led me towards the methods I'll be exploring in this workshop.

Joe Frazier once said, "You can map out a fight plan or a life plan, but when the action starts, it may not go the way you planned, and you're down to your reflexes – that means your preparation. That's where your roadwork shows. If you cheated on that in the dark of the morning, well, you're going to get found out now, under the bright lights." I relate this to drawing, with drawing studies being the "preparation" Frazier mentions. No matter how facile you are in the other facets of art, if you can't draw you'll fail – especially if you're working on a representational image. It's crucial to understand light and form, gesture, weight, linework, shape, anatomy, perspective, depth and the countless other areas of the draftsman. It's easy to find yourself enamoured by all the tricks of picture making, but time spent on the basics of drawing will become your greatest weapon.

My workshop follows the creation of a poster, using basic drawing as the primary focus from beginning to end. The majority of the process finds me working traditionally on illustration board until I scan in the piece and make final tweaks in Photoshop. I explore how to deal with an image that requires significant type, and how to plan for such a case. Enjoy!

1 Thinking on paper
I first sketch out a few ideas for the image. I work small and fast. These drawings aren't precious. I'm just getting ideas out. Next to the thumbnails you can see my tight sketch, where I figure out the type, shape design and placement of the various elements. This is done in pencil ballpoint pen, 30 per cent grey Prismacolor markers and Photoshop. My overall values still need work, though, so I do a few value studies. I print out the linework from the sketch onto standard printer paper and explore my value options using a black marker and B pencil. It's important at this step to keep the values extra limited.
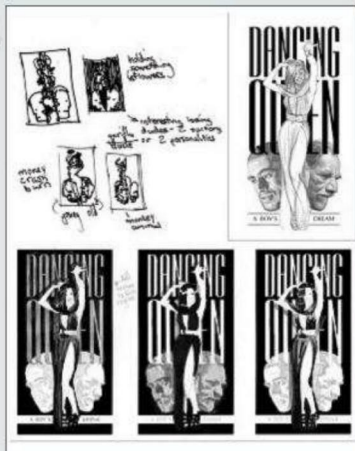
2 Type design
Type should always be planned for from the very beginning! Don't let its inclusion fall by the wayside and leave it for the designer to figure out afterward. I eventually find a typeface that fits behind the figure, is readable and matches the mood of the piece. An understanding of graphic design always comes in useful.

3 Reference photos
My process is rooted in the tradition of Norman Rockwell; I always make an effort to collect the best reference photos possible. I shot a model friend for the female figure, myself for a portrait, and a gentleman that I found outside the studio for the remaining portrait. Lighting isn't important for the female figure because I know her drawing will be done with line work. However, sculptural lighting is key for the two portraits and I make sure I get the right shot for the job. Finally, it's helpful to have a neutral background behind the subject. This helps visibility tenfold!

4 Traditional materials

I use General Charcoal pencils from HB-6B for much of the charcoal work. In addition I use Nu-Pastel greyscale sticks in various values for the rendering of the piece. Sumi ink with a size two Kolinsky Sable brush is used for the inking, and Pro-White covers up any mistakes. Finally, I work the piece on a sheet of 20x30-inch Strathmore Hot Press illustration board. I transfer the sketch by covering the back with graphite and rubbing a stump on top of the sketch's lines to leave a subtle impression on the board.

5 Workspace

I'm fortunate to have a giant drawing table to work on. I like to pin up my surface in the centre and surround the piece with my reference, studies, inspiration and ficus trees. I take inspiration from Milton Caniff, Paolo Rivera, Sterling Hundley and John Romita. At this point I like to have all the picture-making aspects of the piece figured out, and spend my energies working on technique and finesse.
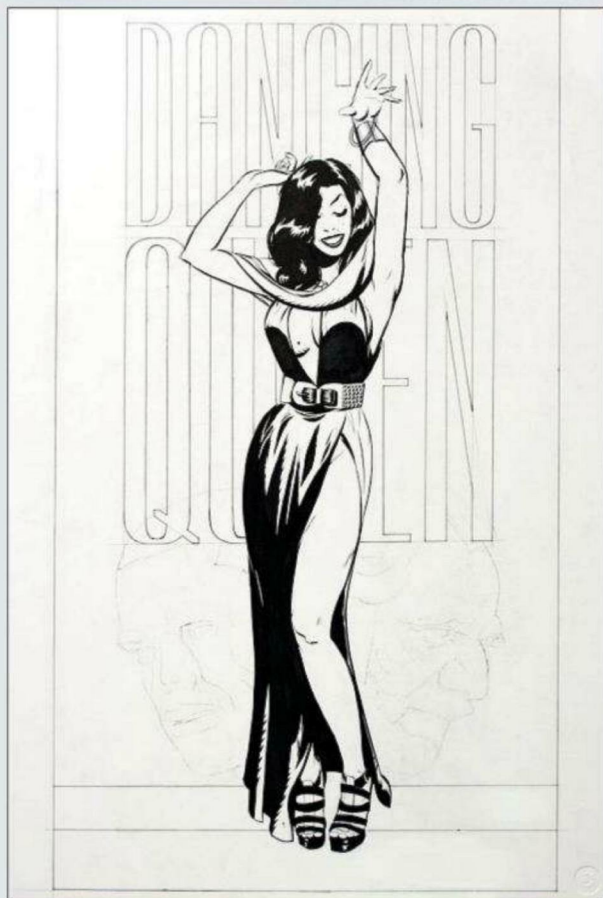
6 Inking techniques

When using a size two Kolinsky Sable brush to ink the figure, I make an effort to keep the marks clean and simple because the portraits will be highly detailed. I also ink-in with a nib, but find the brush to be the perfect tool to ink a curvaceous female. If the main figure was a gnarled male then I probably would use a rough nib. Additionally, I find drawing with your legs and body helps improve line quality, compared to drawing with the wrist and fingers. I'm able to do this because I stand up while inking on the drawing board at a nearly 45-degree angle.

7 Linework layout

This image shows the charcoal pencil block-in I use for the portraits. I made a point to use lines to describe the contours and shadow shapes. At this point I'm mainly working from my studies instead of the photos.
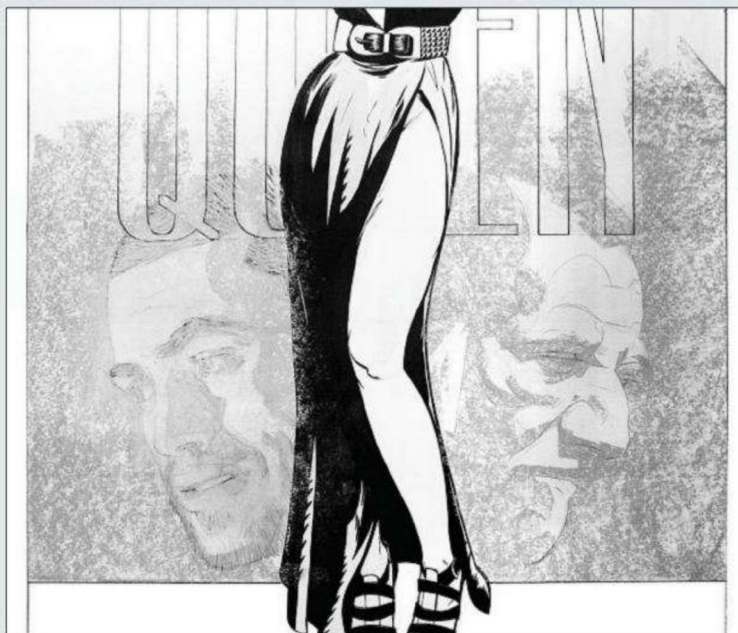
8 Block-in time

I grab a mid-value pastel to block in the shadow shape. The key at this stage is to keep the value as flat, simple and accurate as possible. Imagine that you're working on a two-value ink drawing and have one value for the shadow shapes. Make decisions and take the opportunity to design the shapes. I was fortunate to study with Gary Kelley and am highly influenced by his drawings. The way he designs his shapes is incredible, and he's always in my head as I make drawing decisions.

9 Filling in masses

I know the portraits will be light shapes on a dark background, so to help myself see the relationships I lay in the background. The first pass is done with a darker pastel. Then I go over that with a mixture of water and ink. Finally I add a layer of pure sumi ink, done in small rapid strokes. If I'm going to do the type by hand, I want there to be evidence of that history. The additional time spent is worth it, and gives the piece a nice, hand-drawn, textural feel.

10 Form of the profiles

At this stage it's important to work the entire form – the whole head – at once. I generally lay in a shape and then glaze over it with another value to unify things. This does smear details, though, so I go back with the charcoal pencils and rework the shapes before repeating the glaze process. Then I move into detailing. You use the charcoal pencils for detail work, but then can unify and simplify with the pastel passes. Note that the darkest light should never equal the lightest dark and vice versa. This concept is important to understand, and key to keeping your lights and darks separate.

PRO SECRETS

Collect gesture studies

Of course, drawing from life is the best way to learn the figure. Unfortunately, access to a live model isn't always available. My solution is to create a folder of full-figure, well-lit nudes you gather from the internet and other sources. Using an image view set up a slide show. Set the slide show to play at set intervals and do gestures from your computer screen!

11 Edges and detail

Hopefully you can see in this detail shot that I've made an effort to play with edge work, and am fairly loose in the handling of the rendering. Since I'm working large, the loose handling will appear tight when shrunken down. It's also important to make sure the side of the head has a soft edge. This helps it turn in space and also integrates it into the background. Take a look at Velazquez's portraits for a lesson on edge work, specifically the edges of the sides of the face as they relate to the background.

12 Scanning in

I scan in the picture in about 12 pieces at 300dpi on an 8.5x11-inch scanner. Using Photoshop's Edit>Auto Align Layers>Auto Projection option I'm able to automate the stitching process. The only issue is that the raw scan is often a bit wonky and almost always has a blurred edge from the piece overhanging the scanning bed, so time must be spent correcting angles and lining up areas that need attention before flattening the final scan.
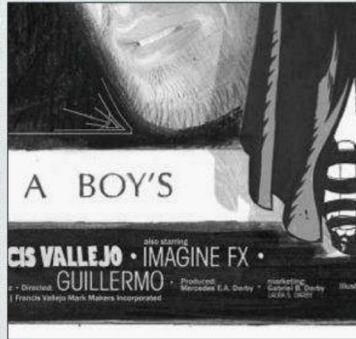
13 Introducing texture

When combining digital marks with traditional ones, pay attention to how you integrate the two medias. This image shows how I roughed up the digital areas to insure that they fit in. A good picture is a beautiful collection of different marks. Take every opportunity to change up mark making. In much of my digital work I use a one-pixel brush. This brush creates fairly textured masses because it's almost impossible to fully paint a flat tone with one pixel; holes will be left in your marks similar to a traditional mark. Yes, it takes a lot of time, but it works!
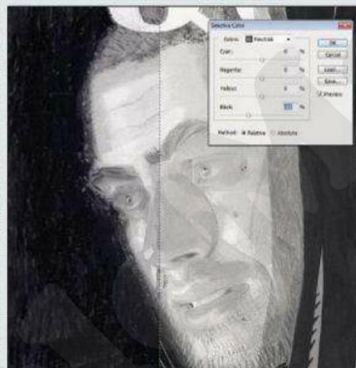
14 Employing the Selective Color tool

I want the portraits to read as overall light shapes relative to the background. There was too much contrast in the original version. Fortunately, I can easily select the heads and in Photoshop click Image Adjustments>Selective Color. Playing with the neutrals, black and white options gives me control over the overall values of the large shapes. Another method would be to use Image Adjustments>Curves.
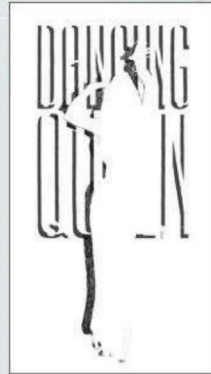
15 Cast shadows

Cast shadows is a great device for separating objects from each other. I learned this from looking at Phil Hale's work. Notice how much of it appears to be shot with a flash camera. I say this because the shadows are the same as you would get from a flash versus a natural, single directional light. I want the dancing figure and the text to pop a bit, so I create a Multiply shadow layer slightly offset behind these shapes and significantly reduce the opacity to the point where you can't necessarily see the shadows as much as you could feel them. This really brings the image together.

16 Final image

A full day is spent in Photoshop adding the accents and touch-ups needed to finish the piece. It also strengthens the hierarchy of information. I want to keep the piece almost monochromatic, with a touch of vintage flavour. The inclusion of blue in the necklace grabs the viewer's eye. I feel the type is a success in that you read it from the top down, in a clear smooth read. I hope you can see how strong picture making and simple quality drawing leads to a successful picture.

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
Reviews

The latest digital art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

14 PRODUCTS ON TEST

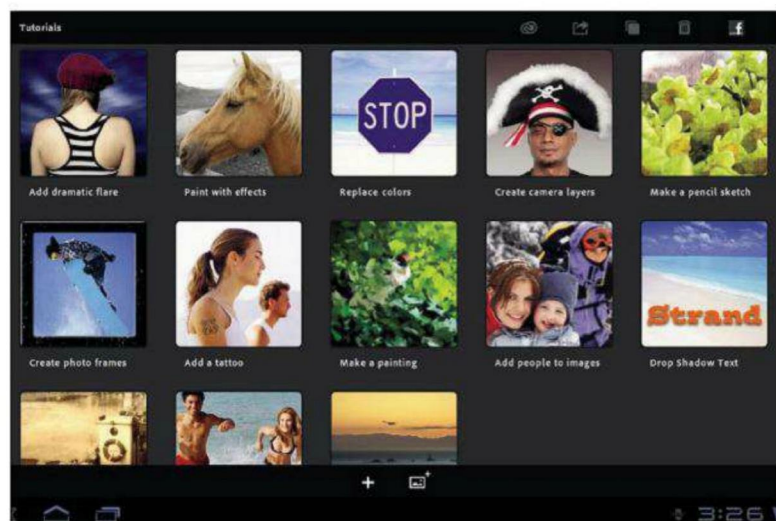**RATINGS EXPLAINED** ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ Magnificent ⭐⭐⭐⭐ Good ⭐⭐⭐ Ordinary ⭐⭐ Poor ⭐ Atrocious
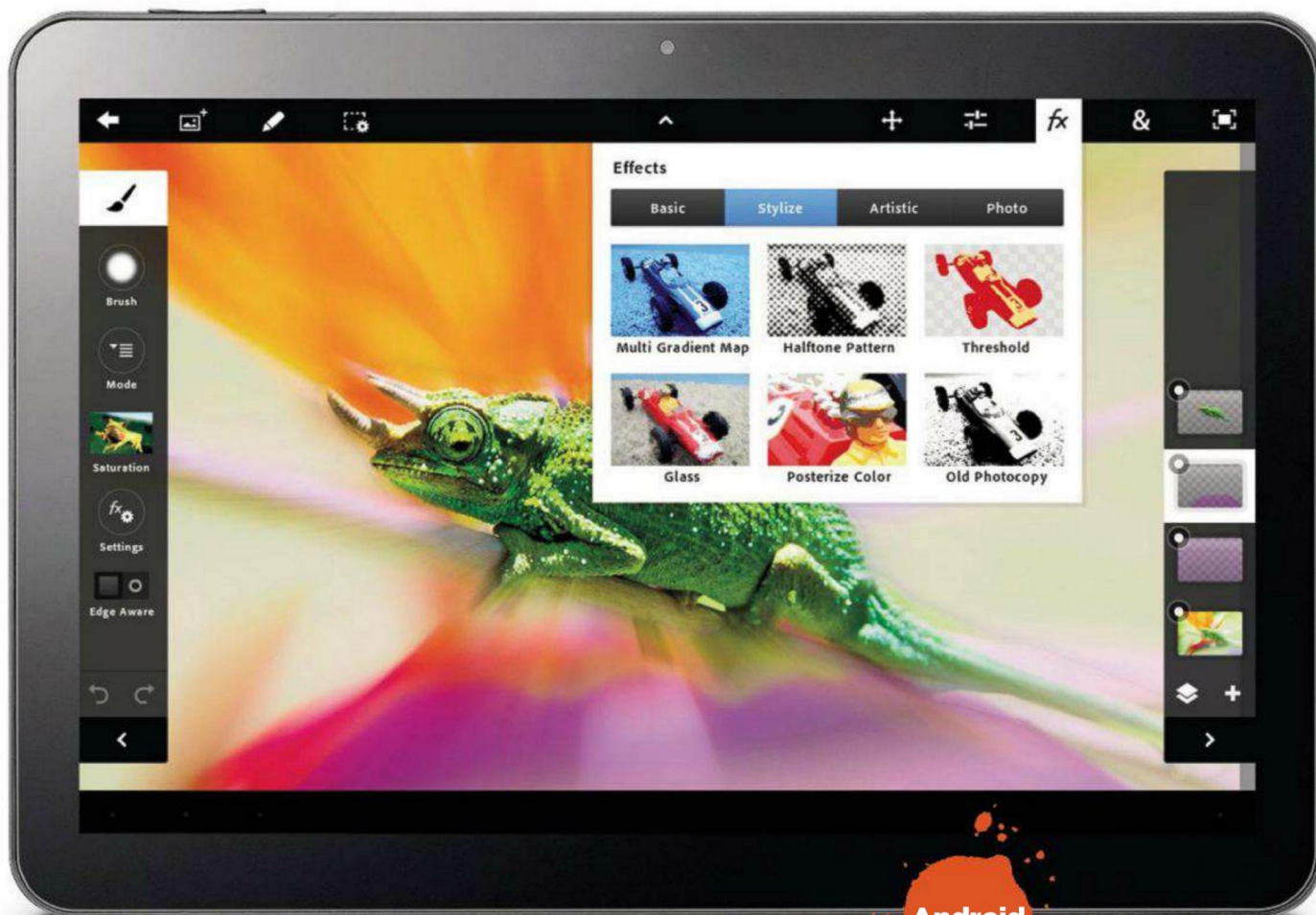
The Photoshop Touch interface is certainly pared back, but it's immediately familiar to Photoshop users.

Photoshop Touch

TOUCH AND GO Photoshop comes to the tablet, but is it a real option for digital artists on the go?

Price £6.99 **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com/uk **Contact** +44 (0) 1628 590 000

With a familiar interface and myriad tools for creating and editing digital images on the move, Photoshop Touch is indispensable. We can't wait for it to hit the iPad.

Photoshop Touch brings to tablets what many artists and creatives have craved for a long time – a Photoshop-like interface with familiar tools that enable you to work on new, or previously created images, on the go. Although other art apps are available, the draw of using Adobe's familiar setup puts an added shine on this new release.

For the moment it's only available for the Android platform – we tested it on a Samsung Galaxy Tab 10.1 – but it should be available on iPad in the first quarter of 2012.

So, what does the tablet edition of Photoshop offer? Well, for a start, using Adobe Creative Cloud, it provides a link between Photoshop on your desktop
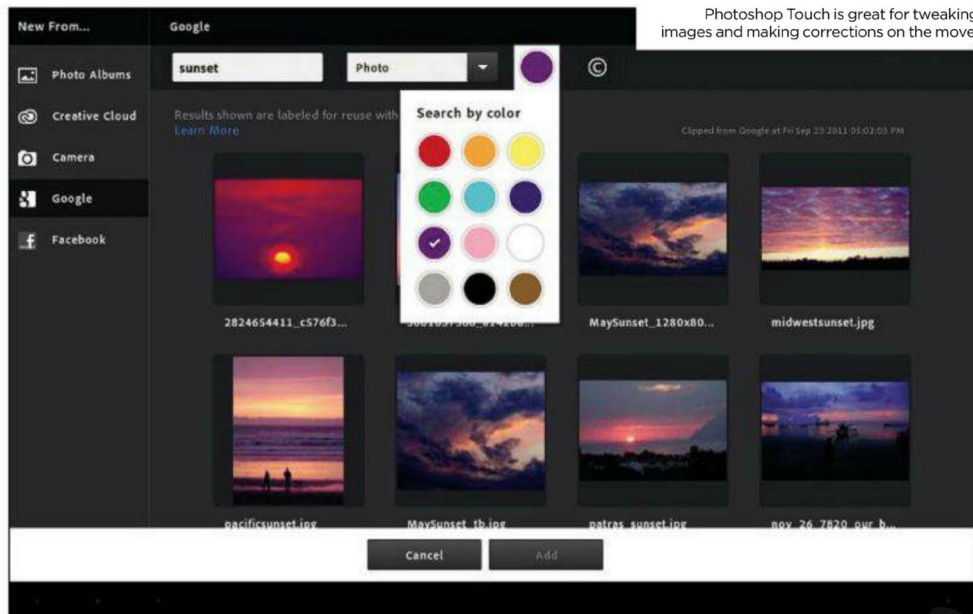
Photoshop Touch is great for tweaking images and making corrections on the move.

CREATIVE CLOUD

What is the Creative Cloud and what can it do for you?

Everyone is talking about 'the cloud', virtual storage and syncing across devices, so it's no surprise that with Adobe's Touch apps comes the introduction of the Adobe Creative Cloud. But what is it and how can it help you as an artist?

Well, it's in its infancy at the moment, with just a handful of features working. But in 2012 the plan is that no matter where you are and what device you're working on, you'll be able to access your files and continue working on them. Sounds quite compelling, huh?

Adobe Creative Cloud is tightly integrated with Adobe's Touch apps. For example, with Photoshop Touch you can save a file to Creative Cloud and then, by logging in to Creative Cloud on your desktop PC or Mac and downloading the file (and installing a plug-in enabling Photoshop CS5 – it won't work with earlier versions – to read the tablet PSDX format) you can continue working on the file, with layers and effects intact. At this moment when you resave as a PSD, upload back to the Creative Cloud and open on your tablet, you lose your layers.

Adobe Debut (not reviewed here, but take a look at **www. adobe.com/uk/products/debut. html**) is another interesting Touch app that integrates with Creative Cloud, enabling you to open up your Creative Suite docs and review them with collaborators or commissioners.

It seems the times when you can be truly mobile as a digital artist are upon us. And that's exciting.

or laptop and Photoshop on your tablet. You can start work on the desktop, upload to the Creative Cloud, and then carry on working (read more in Creative Cloud, far right). You can also create new projects from scratch, or use a photo on your device or the web as a starting point.

Of course, Photoshop Touch brings all manner of familiar image creation

and perform other common tasks. You can crop, adjust levels and curves, change colour balance, add text, warp images and much more. There's also the ability to create layers with blending modes and add filter effects. For the latter, a small preview enables you to select the effect you like, before fine-tuning it with a slider-based dialog. You can also brush on effects
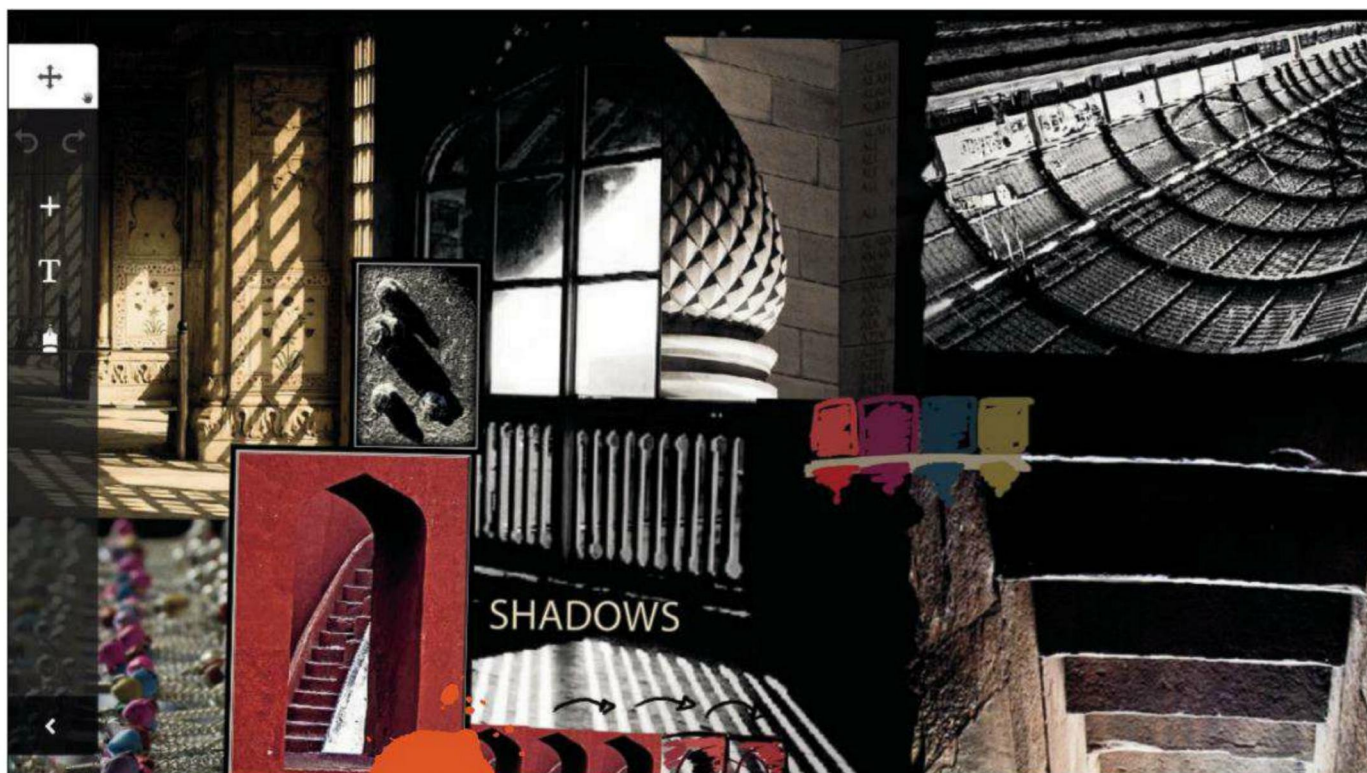
66 As a general tool, it's an absolutely brilliant app and incredibly easy to use. For £6.99, you can't go wrong 99

and editing tools to your touchscreen device. Firstly though, as far as digital painting tools go, you won't find the kind of range on offer with such apps as ArtRage and Procreate. What you do get is a simple, easy-to-control brush interface where you can quickly change scale and hardness, along with being able to specify whether pressure sensitivity affects size and opacity. There's not much as far as brushes go, if we're honest.

What Photoshop Touch does have is an impressive image-editing feature set. You can use your finger (or a stylus) to Select, Clone, Dodge, Burn

by changing the painting mode in the toolbar.

Photoshop Touch may not have the digital painting functionality of some other apps out there, but, as a general tool for tweaking images on the move, it's an absolutely brilliant app and incredibly easy to use (even more so if you're already familiar with Photoshop's established interface). Priced at just £6.99, you can't really go wrong.

If you have an Android tablet capable of running it, go get it. Otherwise, wait with baited breath – like us – for the iPad version.

DETAILS

Features
■ Edit PSDs on the go, saving out as PSDX format
■ Basic brushes with hardness and opacity controls
■ Paint-on filter effects
■ Adjust levels and curves
■ Crop and adjust size of images
■ Layers, including blending modes
■ Add text
■ Transform images with Warp
■ Add gradients and fades
■ Share images to Facebook
■ Lots of tutorials included

System Requirements
Tablet: Android 3.1 or later, iOS version in pipeline
Display size: 8.9-inch or larger
Display resolution: 1,280x800 minimum
Camera: Recommended

Rating

The Adobe Creative Cloud enables you to quickly access your Creative Suite files on the move. It provides a fantastic link between mobile and desktop.

Collage is a nifty app for creating mood boards and starting ideas for creative projects – including graphic novels and paintings.

Collage

Android

ULTIMATE COLLECTION Create mood boards and put together ideas for your next project, with Adobe's Collage

Price £6.99 **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com/uk **Contact** +44 (0) 1628 590 000

You could think of Adobe Collage as a digital mood board – a tool for gathering your thoughts about your next big project or painting and mapping them out visually. If you're the kind of artist who gathers a lot of reference, this could act as a rather neat digital ideas book – something you can take with you everywhere. The process is simple. Create a new collage and then add images and text, if you like. One of the great benefits is being able to add an image directly from your tablet's camera – meaning you can quickly gather reference material on the go and mark it up.

As well as being able to add an image from your camera, you can add it from the Adobe Creative Cloud, your tablet's photo gallery, Flickr or the web. So, if you think you want to do your next graphic novel in the style of Frank Miller with a twist, jump on Google Images within the app, download reference images then scale and rotate them using the multitouch interface.

As well as this you can change the background pattern (there are a number of dots and patterns available) and colour, as well as add text and use a variety of pens to add annotations and circle certain elements. One other feature of note is that you can add videos – from your camera or direct from YouTube.

And that's about it. There's not really anything you couldn't do here with Photoshop Touch (bar the video import), but the dedicated tools help you focus on creating mood boards and working on ideas rather than finished pieces. And, if you're working on a collaboration with another artist, you can quickly share the project via a plethora of different options including Bluetooth, Dropbox, email and Twitter.

It won't be for everyone (we suspect other creative industries such as interior design will make a lot of use of it when it appears on the more mainstream iPad), but Collage is certainly an accomplished and easy-to-use app.

DETAILS

Features
- Create mood boards
- Import images from your camera
- Import images from Google
- Multitouch interface to edit images
- Change background patterns
- Draw annotations and diagrams using pens
- Add text with a variety of fonts
- Add video from YouTube
- Share mood boards via numerous services

System Requirements
Tablet: Android 3.1 or later, iOS version in pipeline
Display size: 8.9-inch or larger
Display resolution: 1,280x800 minimum
Camera: Recommended

Rating
★★★★☆
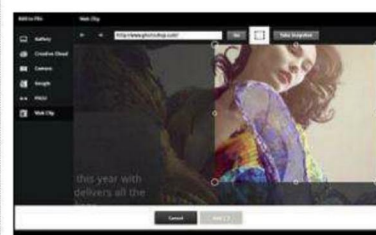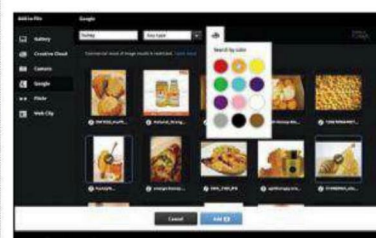
Bring in your sketches, photos and other reference material to create a great starting point for projects.

Adobe Ideas enables you to sketch ideas and bring them into Photoshop or Illustrator.

Android & iPad

Ideas

FAST ART Quickly sketch early concepts that stay as vectors

Price £6.99 (Android) £3.99 (iOS)
Company Adobe
Web www.adobe.com/uk
RATING ✍✍✍✍

Adobe Ideas is the one-touch app that's been around for a while on iOS – and is currently the only one of Adobe's Touch apps available for both the iPad and Android tablets.

It's also an incredibly simple app, being a pared-back, yet surprisingly powerful sketching app. It's much better if you use a stylus, but finger strokes can work – and as the entire output is vector it keeps everything crisp. You can even, using the Adobe Creative Cloud, start a project and then finish it in Illustrator CS5 on a desktop Mac or PC. It makes for an excellent workflow.

Ideas isn't by any means the most powerful of Adobe's Touch apps though, and it falls short of powerful sketching apps such as SketchBook Pro. Brushes are limited and pop-out controls can feel a little awkward. Furthermore, if you're buying it on iOS (it used to be free) then you'll have to shell out another 69p for layers functionality. All in all though, if you're after a vector workflow then Ideas can be a useful way to begin a project and lay down initial thoughts when you're out and about.

Adobe Ideas enables you to upload and sync files with the Adobe Creative Cloud.

Android

Kuler

KULER SHAKER Create and save colour schemes and export them into Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign

Price £6.99 (Android) **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com/uk **Contact** +44 (0) 1628 590 000

Sometimes the hardest part of a project is deciding upon that all-important colour scheme. That's where Kuler comes in.

You may be familiar with Kuler as not only a website, but also an extension of Photoshop and Illustrator CS4 or higher, enabling you to generate harmonious colour schemes by using recognised colour theory.

And this app, available for Android only (for the meantime anyway – iOS versions are expected this year) takes that approach and makes it mobile. The interface is simple. You have a screen where you manage your own colour schemes or browse those from the Kuler community.

Creating a new scheme can be done in one of two ways. The first way is to simply pick a colour model (namely RGB, CMYK, HSV or LAB), then a colour rule (Analogous, Monochromatic, Triad, Complementary, Compound, Shades or Custom) and then pick a colour.

The interface is similar to the Kuler online interface at http://kuler.adobe.com.

Next, using the handles on the picker, choose your other colours.

The second way to pick your scheme is to import an image, either from your photo gallery, Adobe Creative Cloud, your camera or Google Images, and then choose the colours you want to extract and work with.

Kuler is neat. It's easy to use and enables you to quickly knock together colour schemes and discover those that others have created.

If you're struggling with colour, this could be just what you need to help your art along.

DETAILS

Features
- Colour theme creation tools
- Use colour theory to create harmonious schemes
- Share themes with others
- Extract themes from images
- Save themes online
- Access themes created in Creative Suite
- Integration with Creative Cloud
- Tag themes to make them searchable by others

System Requirements
- **Tablet:** Android 3.1 or later, iOS version in pipeline
- **Display size:** 8.9-inch or larger
- **Display resolution:** 1,280x800 minimum
- **Camera:** Recommended

Rating ✍✍✍✍
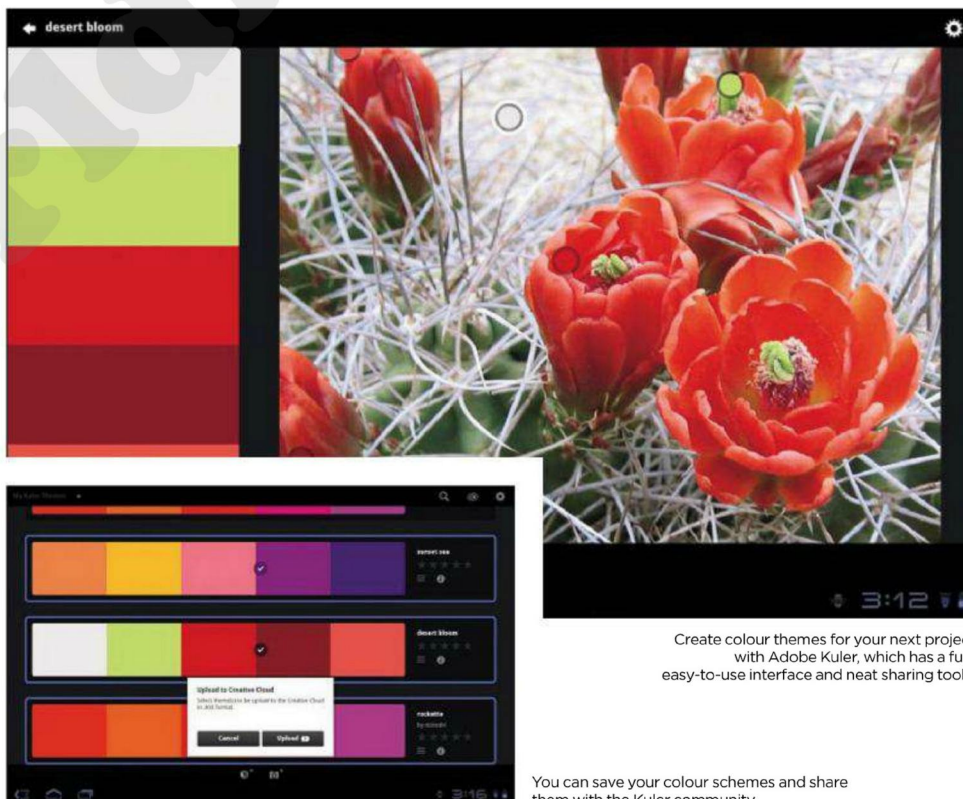
Create colour themes for your next project with Adobe Kuler, which has a fun, easy-to-use interface and neat sharing tools.

You can save your colour schemes and share them with the Kuler community.
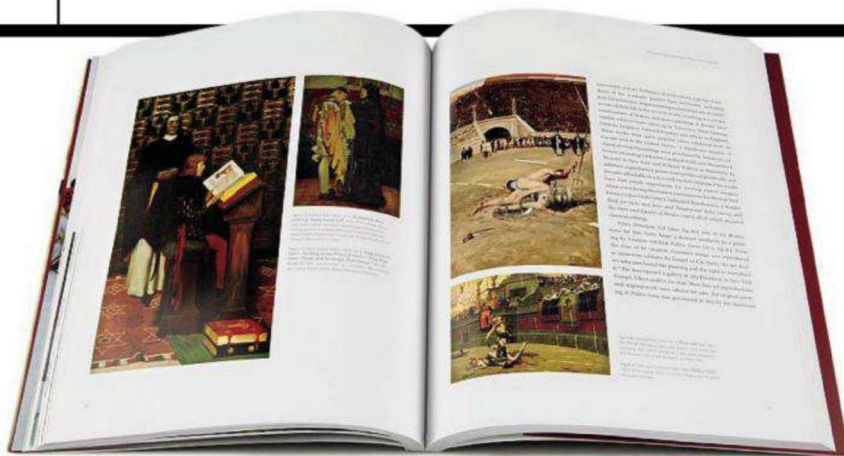
Howard Pyle: American Master Rediscovered

MOUNTAIN OF SKILL The influential US illustrator's work is celebrated in this exhaustive compendium

Author Heather Campbell Coyle **Publisher** The Delaware Art Museum
Price $45 **Web** www.delart.org **Available** Now

In Howard Pyle's mere 58 years he illustrated novels from the likes of Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain, taught illustration to N. C. Wyeth and Frank Schoonover, and wrote his own still-revered interpretations of Arthurian legends and Robin Hood. His images were seen by millions at the turn of the last century, and his influence can still be found in today's big-screen renditions of rascally outlaws.

American Master Rediscovered covers Pyle's life and art in a series of essays from art critics, curators and historians. Each is richly brought to life with Pyle's paintings and illustrations, as well as those of artists influenced and taught by Pyle himself. It's a wordy, slightly academic book, but offers great insight into Pyle's style and how he reflected the issues of the time.

Most fascinating is Anne M. Loechle's analysis of Pyle's piratical illustrations. Loechle points out that Pyle invented the colourful vision of pirates we all know and love. She also comments that Pyle's pirates are essentially greedy, irredeemable figures, unlike the more morally healthy wealth redistribution of, say, Robin Hood. It reflected the issues of the cash-strapped times, which goes some way in explaining why pirates are as idolised today as they were then.

What's notable throughout the book is how Pyle took the then-low art form of illustration and elevated it to something comparable with high art through meticulous use of colour and evocative, emotive figures. Van Gogh was said to be a fan, noting that he found Pyle's images "astounding". Like today's rock stars, Pyle's work was rebellious, his attitude idiosyncratic and his works were followed by a primarily youthful audience.

Pyle certainly had a head for literature, and his take on Arthurian legends is still in print today. Like the best comic book artists, his talent lay in conveying the subtle, unsaid discourse between words and pictures. We can only imagine what Pyle would make of today's comics and films, but it's more than likely he would be impressed that his work has reached so far and wide. This is essential reading for anyone with a passing interest in illustration, and, well, everyone else too. And for Dinotopia artist James Gurney's take on Pyle's achievements, turn to page 56.
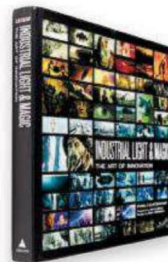
RATING
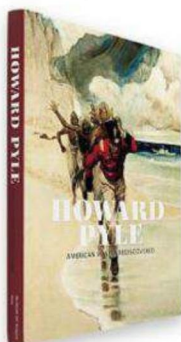
Further reading…

Go behind the scenes with Hollywood animation kings Pixar and ILM

Industrial Light & Magic: The Art of Innovation

Edited Pamela Glintenkamp
Publisher Abrams **Price** £35
Available Now
RATING

George Lucas brought Industrial Light & Magic into existence in 1975 in an empty warehouse in Los Angeles, to provide the visual effects for 1977's Star Wars. Since then the company's continued to push boundaries for blockbusters such as Avatar, Pirates of the Caribbean and Iron Man. The Art of Innovation catalogues the cinematic achievements of the company that made Jim Carrey's eyes pop out in The Mask and let Tom Hanks shake hands with JFK in Forrest Gump.

It's slightly missold as an "art" book. But if you're keen to get to grips with 3D effects and modelling you'll find a lot of inspiration here, and gain a detailed knowledge of how effects have changed over the past 30 years.

The Art of Pixar

Edited Amid Amidi
**Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** $50
Available Now
RATING

Toy Story creator Pixar's love of traditional animation is amply highlighted in this tome, which covers the studio's "colourscripts". These are storyboards from which the 3D artists can gain a sense of tone and character. They're free of any visual distractions such as dialogue from the films, or arrows directing the camera. You're meant to read them like a visual language. In addition, the book features detailed artwork from key films such as The Incredibles, Monsters, Inc. and WALL-E.

The accompanying text is kept to a minimum, with a brief, touching introduction from Pixar head honcho John Lasseter. It's stunningly put together, and delivers a powerful insight into how much care and attention the studio puts into every frame of its films. ●
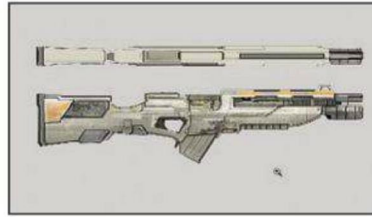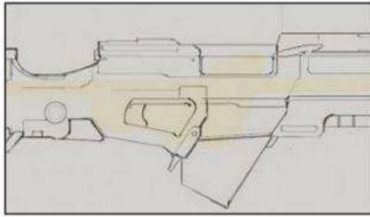
Good-quality props are underestimated. They're a big help in making characters seem believable.
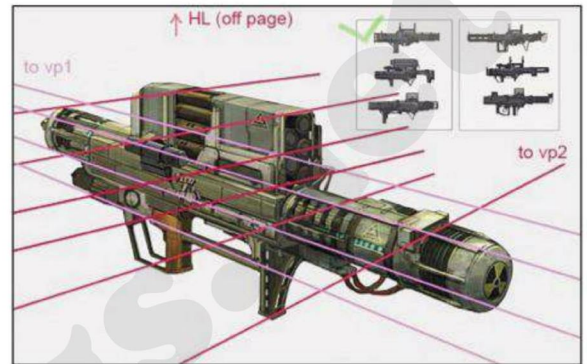
After covering some basic Photoshop settings Brian steps up his game, and explains the benefits of working in two-point perspective.

Photoshop Weapon Prop Design

DRAW YOUR WEAPON Concept artist Brian Yam explains all you need to know about designing production-ready props

Publisher cmiVFX **Price** $30 **Format** Video stream **Web** www.cmivfx.com

The importance of props in artwork can be underestimated. Yet weapons and other items are essential in convincing onlookers that your characters are living, breathing things. Brian Yam spends his working day getting such details right, so he's eminently qualified to show you how to create props that look great and feel right.

The first 30 minutes of his video make an inauspicious start, though, with Brian going through his Photoshop settings. Yes, there are some useful tips, but this segment could have been much shorter and remained just as useful. It's better suited to Photoshop newcomers.

The following chapter, explaining different types of perspective, shows similar signs of being pitched too much at beginners... until Brian turns things around brilliantly by showing how using one-point perspective helps you relate your design to first-person shoot-'em-ups, and how working in two-point perspective helps you provide your game developer's modelling department with better-quality information. Now we're talking.

The video just keeps getting better from there, as Brian explains how to establish a design for your weapon via research and thinking your way into how the character uses the weapon. Sketches and value studies lead to one weapon being developed into the finished article, ready to hand over for modelling. By the end, you'll have formed a solid and coherent sense of how to design weapons, particularly for games, in a way that makes them believable and ready to be converted into 3D. Brian's delivered all the basics you need to get started.

The video is available only as an online stream, which may not be to everyone's taste. But our experience of the website video player was of smooth, consistent playback, with only occasional, tiny skips in the audio.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Setting preferences
- Cameras and basic perspective
- Basing your design on a brief
- Researching the prop's world
- Thumbnails and value sketches
- Refining the design
- Colour and textures

Length
187 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
BRIAN YAM

Brian's a concept artist working in the entertainment industry. His experience spans over nine years and he's worked for companies including ImageMovers Digital, Imagi Animation Studios, Spark Unlimited, Naughty Dog and Insomniac Games. Brian found his calling in the concept design field after working in the science domain for a few years. He's discovered that his passion is for designing vast environments and spaceships, as well as cool-looking props for games and film.

www.drawingmantis.com

Bean here, done that: Sean's still dining out on LotR's Boromir.

Game of Thrones

CHECKMATE Respectful of the original text, this HBO series is fantasy at its most backstabbingly human

Distributor Warner **Certificate** 18 **Price** £27 (Blu-ray, £35) **Available** 5 March

When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die," quips the ruthless queen Cersei Lannister to her husband's loyal friend Eddard Stark. "There is no middle ground." But this production of George RR Martin's first book of his A Song of Ice and Fire pentalogy is all about the middle ground. It's a dissection of the chess-like strategies made by warring dynasties and the people behind each decisive play.

Tellingly, fans of the book seem to have taken it to their hearts. Series writers David Benioff and DB Weiss have depicted the complex web of backstabbing power plays over the seven kingdoms of Westeros with deceptive ease. Sure, they've made up some scenes and dialogue, or left out some detail from the source material, but it's always to give added sinew to a character, or sustain the story's breakneck momentum.

Viewers certainly have to pay attention as the episodes zip through dozens of characters, with a central storyline emerging of Eddard Stark defending his pal, the drink-sodden king Robert Baratheon, from a nest of court vipers and encroaching enemies.

According to supervising art director Paul Inglis, the team of concept artists, including Kimberley Pope (**www.bit.ly/ kimpope**), produced up to 400 drawings for each main construction, and there's dirt-under-the-nails detail to back him up. This first series may be fantasy with a small 'f', but one that subtly lodges in your mind, entwined as it is with an HD eye for historical detail. This is a dark age with a living memory of dragons and White Walkers.

The cast is uniformly brilliant: Peter Dinklage nails flippant imp Tyrion Lannister, and Lena Headey and Nikolaj Coster-Waldau's depiction of the Lannister twins has a chilling narcissism. The only criticism is about the month we'll have to wait for the 1 April air date of series 2, episode 1.

RATING

Also look at…

Impressive Star Trek Blu-ray teaser, but The Three Musketeers isn't must-see

The Three Musketeers

Distributor One Entertainment
Certificate 12
Price £20 (Blu-ray, £25)
Available Now
RATING

Aiming for the Pirates of the Caribbean audience, the classic Alexandre Dumas story gets a fantastical interpretation. Three musketeers, Athos (Matthew Macfadyen), Porthos (Ray Stevenson) and Aramis (Luke Evans) are dragged out of retirement by cocky upstart d'Artagnan (Logan Lerman), to prevent a war between France and England.

Paul WS Anderson's Musketeers are cast as swashbuckling spies armed with Renaissance gadgets. Aided by Orlando Bloom's villainous Buckingham (part Bowie, part Beckham), and Milla Jovovich as the double-crossing Milady de Winter, The Three Musketeers is a breathless, comic-book adaptation that almost pays off.

Yet, without a character as engaging as Captain Jack Sparrow, and with subplots barely explored, the film is a glossy period clothes horse to hang a succession of ludicrous fight scenes from.

Star Trek: TNG: The Next Level

Distributor CBS DVD
Certificate 12
Price £10 (Blu-ray only)
Available Now
RATING
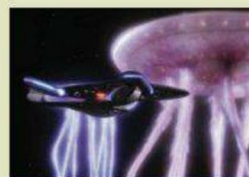
Celebrating the 25th anniversary of The Next Generation, this first teaser Blu-ray contains the feature-length pilot episode, Encounter at Farpoint, plus fan favourites Sins of the Father and The Inner Light.

Re-edited from the original 35mm film negative, this Blu-ray is a tantalising taste of the seven-season Blu-ray release scheduled for later in the year. The HD remaster is impressive, with crisp and colour-rich image quality replacing the original fuzzy videotape transfer, enabling the blend of early CG effects, puppets and models to capture the imagination all over again.

Sins of the Father won an Emmy for Best Art Direction and its iconic matte paintings of the Klingon planet, often muddy and featureless in standard definition, are clear and impressive in HD. The Inner Light, winner of a Hugo Award, is beautifully written and artistically directed.

Solid Snake and EVA forego stealth to make a quick – if noisy – getaway.

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

SHINING EXAMPLE The titles that combined stealth with action are repackaged for the high-def generation

Format PS3, Xbox 360 **Publisher** Konami Productions **Price** £30
Available Now **Web** www.metalgearsolid.com

Kojima Productions' art director Yoji Shinkawa is as vital to Metal Gear Solid as the series' creator, Hideo Kojima. His character designs explode with originality and personality, his settings immediately evoke a feeling of time and place, and his work overseeing the three games in the HD Collection is three lessons in one.

First released in 2002, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty was about defining architecture and machinery so that leading man Raiden's sense of reality could be tested when the world starts to break down around him. Metal Gear Solid 3 was about James Bond-style adventure and Sixties espionage – bringing together jungles, mountains and Soviet bases in a gritty and low-tech style. Peace Walker, only previously released on PSP, was about making the most of the handheld's limited technical abilities while working seamlessly with Australian artist Ashley Wood for cutscenes that marry the best of Eastern and Western styles.

In terms of gameplay, the three are varied enough to keep you guessing. While MGS2 and MGS3 share a similar blend of stealth, action and shooting, new camera and control settings for MGS3 and its quirky sense of humour and expression ensure this is the jewel in the series. Peace Walker steps away from the formula slightly, offering a blend of RPG and RTS action mixed with the familiar stealth approach of its broader console counterparts.

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection comprises three quite brilliant games: all are unique and compelling, and classics in their own right. They manage to look and feel completely different while still consistent thanks to some of the best character and environment design in the business. More than most, the Metal Gear Solid series has helped establish a visual language of video games, and now that they're in HD and bundled together, this is an essential collection to enjoy all over again.

RATING

Also look at…

Make your own way in the Star Wars universe, and kill three-inch zombies

Star Wars: The Old Republic

Format PC
Publisher EA
Price £45
Available Now
RATING

The Old Republic is a more stylised take on the Star Wars universe than Sony's Star Wars Galaxies. Both games share art director Jeff Dobson, but in The Old Republic his style lifts from Bioware's original Knights of the Old Republic and the Clone Wars TV show. Crucially, to go toe-to-toe with World of Warcraft, The Old Republic needs to run on as many machines as it can. Spaces are massive and characters are detailed, but look carefully and you'll find low-resolution textures and simple geometry masked by a beautiful, cohesive design.

The game's look draws the disparate worlds of The Old Republic together, but the game does its best to break Dobson's illusion. The Old Republic is a series of instanced planets where you can happily work alone, and it can sometimes feel a little isolated – even when servers are full. For now there's not quite enough MMO in Bioware's first MMO.

Resident Evil Revelations

Format 3DS
Publisher Capcom
Price £35
Available Now
RATING

The bravest thing about Resident Evil Revelations was the decision to release it on 3DS. Everything else was safe and risk-free: the game takes Resident Evil 5's characters, adds Resident Evil 5's gunplay and launches into a story set between the events of Resident Evils 4 and 5.

It's a solid shooter with an admirable commitment to classic Resident Evil puzzling and ammo conservation, but Revelations is a dark game on a small screen that's hard on the eyes and rough on the art team's attempts at building atmosphere. As such, Revelations' only real failing is an artistic one. The kind of darkness and density that works so well on a TV makes Revelations confusing and disorientating on the 3DS' three-inch display. Darkness, immersion and cinematic horror just aren't compatible with a handheld. Revelations was set up to be a true Resident Evil game, but has a total disregard for the platform it was built for.

LOCATION Toronto, Canada **RECENT PROJECT** Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 6 **WEB** www.toronto.ubisoft.com

The new team at Ubisoft Toronto are busy redesigning Splinter Cell's iconic hero Sam Fisher.

Ubisoft Toronto Studio

BRANCHING OUT It's all go at the latest studio of mega-publisher Ubisoft

Challenges don't come much bigger than those facing experienced art director **Scott Lee**. Even with his 16 years' experience in creating video games, comics and films, the decision to help set up a new studio and redesign the iconic Splinter Cell series tops his past ambitions.

"As a studio Ubisoft Toronto is a remarkable mix of industry-leading AAA development with the closeness and chemistry of a start-up," says Scott. "There's something innately personal about a studio that one helps build from the ground up and the family atmosphere is something we're very proud of."

While Scott points out the video games industry is young and reactionary – "flying by the seat of your pants" – at Ubisoft there's a maturity that offers the stability to develop new ideas. The studio is headed by Jade Raymond and operates on the 'open plan concept' with artists sitting next to level designers and animators with programmers. "This allows for creative iteration on the fly," says level artist **Denny Borges**.

Character artist Nils Meyer says the CG art community is vital to self-improvement.

© James Everett

ARTIST INTERVIEW
NILS MEYER

Nils explains the challenge of working at Ubisoft Toronto

PROJECTS Team members have worked on the Assassins Creed and Splinter Cell franchises

© James Everett

Is it daunting to work on a big franchise like Splinter Cell?

More challenging and exciting than daunting. At Ubisoft Toronto we constantly strive to raise the quality bar, and we feel we are on the right track. What I love the most is that we have true ownership of our characters in the next Splinter Cell, and that's a career-defining opportunity for me as an artist.

Where do you get your ideas from and how does the studio environment help?

We practise sharing ideas regularly and the collaborative process truly helps to inspire my work. The team structure and open concept environment at Ubisoft Toronto create inspiration like I've never experienced before when developing art for games.

What's the biggest challenge that you face working in the games industry?

Currently, we're still limited by console and engine technology. Realising our visions within these technical limitations can be tough sometimes. These boundaries are quickly expanding though, extending what's possible in games. You need to constantly improve your art as well as your technical skills to keep up with the fast pace of innovation.

What advice would you give to an artist wanting to break into the games industry?

It's important that you have a passion for games. It's also a benefit to be a bit technical and have an interest in how games are made to deliver art that'll work within the restrictions of a game. But while the technical savvy can be taught, you can't easily teach someone to be a great artist. Practising this invaluable skill is critical to success. Joining one of the countless art forums online is a great way to get game-related feedback, tutorials and all kinds of reference materials.

A lead character artist at Ubisoft Toronto working on the next Splinter Cell team, Nils is busy redesigning Sam Fisher.

www.toronto.ubisoft.com

Like Scott, Denny has worked in the video games industry for many years. He's part of the handpicked art team and jumped at the chance to take ownership of a studio and start something new from the ground up with like-minded people. "It's really inclusive and feels like a family," says the artist.

As the studio grows Scott highlights the problem of consistency. A problem solved by solid, well-planned preparation. Scott creates style guides

make the place and determine a successful project, and Ubisoft Toronto is still hiring.

"Whether you're a student or a veteran, I always search for ambitious subject matter and execution with extraordinary attention to detail," says Scott as he identifies what impresses him in a portfolio. "Simplistic game art is a part of game development, but this is something easily learned. Stellar craftsmanship will make the work rise above the rest."

Before: the studio in its bare state before the team called in the interior designers...

... and after: a lick of paint later and Ubisoft Toronto Studio is up and ready for business.

❝ There's something innately personal about a studio that one helps to build from the ground up ❞

and concepts that include early gameplay and level design elements. This is then handed to the art teams who take ownership of these "seed concepts" and enable the artists to put their stamp on the project. Keeping the art direction "narrow" says Scott, is the key: "Art direction that wants to be or do too many things often achieves none of the goals successfully."

Scott's approach to the studio workflow puts responsibility in the hands of its artists, and with that comes innovation. "To innovate, we must take risks and test new concepts," says Denny. "At Ubisoft, the company puts a huge emphasis on creativity in art and gives us time to test new methods in a way that's part of the iterative process."

This approach to risk and workflow ensures that taking on the Splinter Cell franchise is less daunting, and indeed more experimental than some may imagine. Scott is clear that people

But for Ubisoft Toronto, there's nothing more important than team chemistry for success. "When a candidate has shown the skill to get into the studio, we then look to see if this individual will be an excellent teammate who shares our core studio values."

There's a freshness to Ubisoft Toronto and a driving ambition to do things differently that suggests the challenge of creating a new studio, with new processes and people, will pay off. 🔸
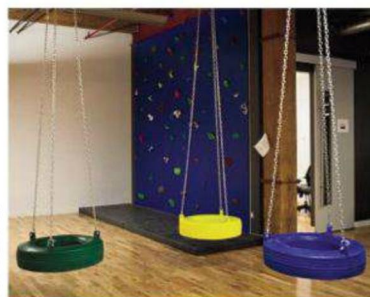
© James Everett

What better way to get the creative juices flowing than from the top of an indoor climbing wall?

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FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX YouTube

Just a few of the brilliant artist videos that you can find on our YouTube channel...
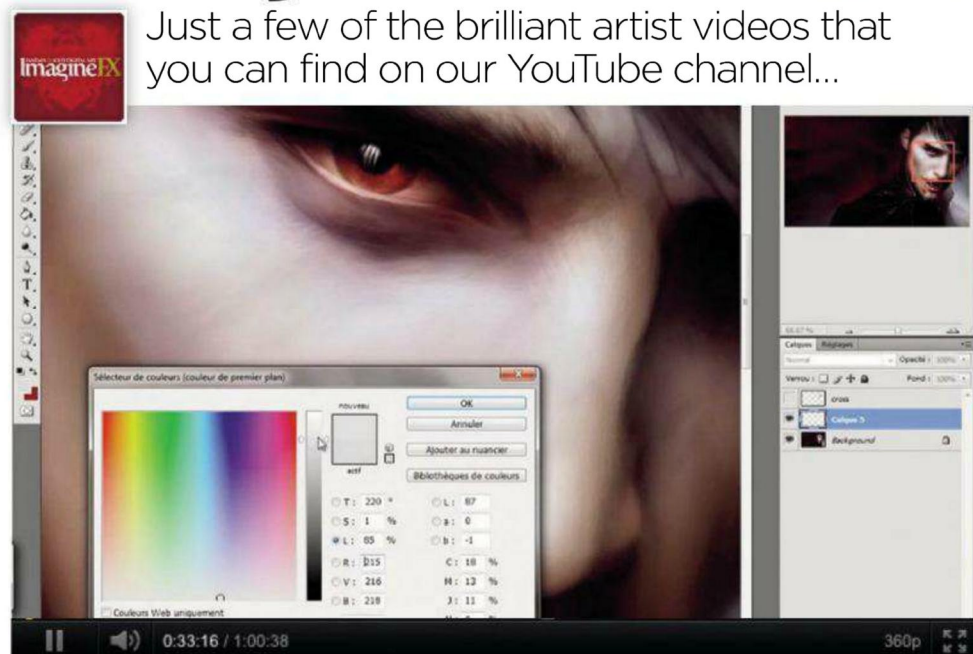
Paint a vampire in Photoshop

French artist Mélanie Delon shares her process of creating a hauntingly beautiful male creature of the night. Watch the video at **www.bit.ly/mdelon**.

Environments

See how Mike McCain creates a dramatic sci-fi landscape at **www.bit.ly/mikemccain**.

Realistic females

Marta Dahlig explains how she paints a real fantasy woman at **www.bit.ly/mdahlig**.

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